

28 June 2013 - Higher Things Friday Matins

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“Life and Forgiveness From Above”

Text: 1 Kings 17:17-24

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Where there's sin, there's death. Where there's death, there's sin. The two always go together. Of that you can be sure. This widow's theology was spot on. She sees death, she thinks sin.

Oh, we often believe otherwise. That's what satan wants us to believe. That's the lie he whispers into our ears or these days even trumpets into our faces via the media or social media. That our sin won't cause death - oh no, no! - but give us life. That if you only do this, if you only take that, if only you indulge a little, your life will *improve*. So a few tasty words spoken, a little lust satisfied, a bit of “do unto others because they've done unto me” . . .

No. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). The widow was right about that.

So she blasts Elijah: ***You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!***

What sin, I wonder. What sin was weighing heavily on her mind? What sin had she so buried, so locked away, so explained away with a thousand excuses, that was now coming back to haunt her? Because she couldn't deal with it, she couldn't make it go away, she couldn't make it okay no matter how hard she tried. All she had done with her efforts was make it fester and grow . . . and now it was back again. Haunting her. Crushing her.

That's you again, isn't it? For what sins are weighing heavy on your mind? What words you wish you had never spoken, deeds you wish you could take back, what friend you wish you had never betrayed - those thoughts and desires that keep slithering back into your hearts and minds . . .

Indeed, this is our life “from below.” Sin and death. The death of friends, of family, of loved ones - *your* death. Sin and death, from which we cannot set ourselves free.

But as right and spot on as the widow was, she was also wrong - dead wrong. Elijah was not there to cause the death of her son - but to bring life to the widow! Life in the forgiveness of her sins. Life in the God of life who brings life “from above.”

And so Elijah takes her son - her only son - and prays to the God of life *for* life, and life is given *from above*. And the widow confesses: ***Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.***

And again I wonder: what word? Seems that Elijah wasn't just *staying* with this widow but *preaching* to her. And the word she now knew is truth was the word she doubted before; the word that her son's death caused her to disbelieve. For if where there's death, there's sin, and where there's sin, there's death - then also now she knows and believes this too: *where there's life, there's forgiveness, and where there's forgiveness, there's life*. The word of the Lord from Elijah of a forgiving God was indeed the truth! And so not only her son, but the widow too, is given life *from above*.

And you too. For you, hounded by sin and surrounded by death. For you who doubt and worry and fear. For you who have tried to manage and deal with your sin, only to have those skeletons explode out of the closet at the worst times . . . This forgiveness is for you too.

For Elijah is still preaching forgiveness and pointing to the God of forgiveness for us sinners today. For he points us to Jesus - God come down *from above* to us *here below*. For the Elijah who was to come, the *second* Elijah, John the Baptist, points us to Jesus with the confession: *Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29)! And then Elijah shows up again on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and talks about what? Jesus' exodus. His death and resurrection. His victory over sin and death for us.

Elijah points us to Jesus, as all good and faithful prophets do.

To Jesus, who laid in our tomb three days, laying not just on one young man, but in the place of all humanity, to give life to all in His resurrection.

To Jesus, who was poured upon you three times in water and the Word in Holy Baptism, to give life to you in the forgiveness of your sins.

To Jesus, conquering death, conquering sin; conquering sin, conquering death. For the two always go together.

And this Word is truth. The Word of the Lord that proclaims to you *I forgive you all your sins*. Those not your pastor's words, but your Lord's words. Truthful words. Words that do what they say. For Jesus' tomb is empty. And so will yours be. For where there's forgiveness, there's life, and where there's life, there's forgiveness. *For you*.

The widow saw and believed. *Blessed are you who have not seen, yet have believed* (John 20:29).

The widow then magnified the Lord who had done great things for her. And so do you, using the words of that *other* widow whose only son was raised from the dead for the life of the world.

The widow praised the Lord of life. And so will you now sing your *Te Deum Laudamus*: "We praise you, O Lord, we acknowledge you to be the Lord." Good theology. Spot on.

And the widow and her son then - like they had for so many days already - ate and drank. They continued to eat the food that God provided for them: the flour and oil that never ran out. And so too you and I who have been raised from the death of *our* trespasses and sins to a new life of faith and forgiveness. We too will now eat and drink the food that never runs out. Not the flour and oil, but the Body and Blood that our Lord provides for us. The food *from above* that gives us life *from above*. Life now and life forever. *Te Deum Laudamus!*

In the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.