

Lord God, heavenly Father, the treasures and riches of heaven and its glories far outweigh the most desirable riches and treasures that our earthly life affords. Grant us a zeal and concern for our *neighbor's* spiritual welfare that is at least the equal of the craftiness and shrewdness whereby men sell their souls for earthly happiness. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. (Luther for the Busy Man, ed. P.D. Pahl, adapted, p. 281)

And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'" And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that He spoke by Elijah. After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. And he cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?" Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives." And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

In Christ Jesus who was spent completely upon the cross, so that we might be filled, dear fellow redeemed (and especially you our dear confirmands – Anna, America and Alyssa):

The U.S. national debt is at about \$26 Trillion dollars and still climbing. We keep spending money we do not have. How long can this continue? (*I remember a time we said our children will have to pay this, but I look at our confirmands and think their great grandchildren will have to pay it, if then.*) Most politicians do not seem too concerned about it. But at least theoretically our credit at some point will be spent. Then what?

Not even the greatest nation on earth has unlimited resources. But not so with the Kingdom of God. The eternal God will never reach His limit of being able to supply His people all our personal needs and the needs of His kingdom. Our text for today about God's prophet Elijah, the widow and her son, teaches us how we too can **Confidently Spend and Be Spent for the Kingdom of God.**

I

How confident would you have been if you were the widow in our text, when Elijah said to her: "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." She responded rather despondently: "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." Then Elijah took it up a notch and told her: "Do not fear; go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son."

We are told she did what Elijah instructed her to do, not based on Elijah's person, but rather what God promised through the prophet: "The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth." Would your faith allow you to act in such a desperate situation? This widow did, as we are told: "she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that He spoke by Elijah." Faith overcame her fear and she did what the Lord commanded her to do.

Now, her faith was not in her faith – "*I believe in my faith*", nor in her strength – *widow strong*. Nor was her faith in her ingenuity based on scientific calculations. It was faith in the Word and promise of God. This is what you and I are called to do. We are to have faith in the Word of God, which promises us our daily bread. It promises us that all things will work together for our good.

Are you willing to declare today that you are confirmed in your faith in God's Word, in all His promises to you? It is easy to state our confirmation in God's Word and all His promises, when everything

is going well and we are not being tempted to doubt. But what happens when you are challenged and you come to the scary point of saying to yourself: "*that we may eat and die*"?

II

Will you be willing to spend and be spent for God's kingdom when you are experiencing such a challenge, wondering if God is forsaking you, turning His back on you? This is what happened to the widow. After the drought ended and she spent everything she had every day and was never disappointed: "the son of the woman ... became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. And she said to Elijah, 'What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!'" Perhaps she recounted her doubtful look in the jar and jug to see if the contents were truly replenished daily.

Notice how quickly this widow's conscience kicked into high gear: "you have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance"! When bad things happen to us in this life, we automatically have the accusing voice of Satan echoing in our consciences. Our sinful flesh rises up and concludes, wrongly of course, that God is against us. Even if we have been willing to spend and be spent for His kingdom and have done so, our sin floods in upon us throwing us into spiritual turmoil.

In our Gospel for today we heard Jesus tell the story of the unjust steward who confidently spent all his capital even though in truth it was not his to spend. But our gracious Lord supplies us with all that we need and calls upon us to manage it well to give Him glory and serve our neighbors. Jesus calls us to be shrewd with all that He gives us for the purpose that His kingdom continues to grow.

But you know how we are tempted to be stingy, instead of generous with what our Lord supplies us. We do not naturally want to spend and be spent, lest we give up too much and restrict what we want to secure for ourselves. As we grow in our faith in Christ our Savior, we grow in our loving appreciation for all that He has and continues to do for us. It is based on this question from the Apostle Paul: "God is for us ... He did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" We can never out give God. Yes, He calls upon us to spend and be spent for His Kingdom, but never will He leave us destitute.

You have learned well, that you do not have the power on your own to resist your natural sinful tendencies to be stingy and hold back in what you commit to anyone or anything else, be it Christ's Kingdom or not. As we heard though in our Epistle today, we do not

rest on our power and ability to resist such temptations. So we are to be prepared: "anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall ... God is faithful ... He will provide ...that you may be able to endure."

We see the widow in our text having her faith confirmed. Elijah called upon God in behalf of her son, asking three times: "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." "The life of the child came into him again, and he revived ..." Elijah said, "See, your son lives." And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth." Her faithful acts of spending and being spent was not disappointed, although challenged. God did not disappoint, He never does.

Yes, you are not always that faithful steward of what our Lord has blessed you in this life. But Jesus was that perfect steward in your place and spent all He had unto death for you. Your sins of stinginess, greed and selfishness have all been paid for with His blood. You are forgiven and declared holy in Him. He still gives to you the very body and blood He spent to save you in the Holy Supper.

You are going to face many challenges to your faith in your gracious generous Savior God throughout your lives as His believers. He still calls you to spend and be spent trusting that you will never be lacking nor disappointed. (*This is what our confirmands will vow to do their whole lifelong.*) Live in your Lord's gracious promises: first, His free and generous daily forgiveness, then also the daily bread and care He also gives to you. Be confirmed in His faithfulness not only today but for your whole life-long seeking to remain faithful as you are given the opportunities to spend and be spent to His glory and the welfare of your neighbors. Amen.