**1 Kings 17:17-24 (ESV)**

17 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. 18 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!” 19 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. 20 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?” 21  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.” 22 And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23 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.” 24 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.”

**“The Life Giving Word”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. The old switcheroo happened to Israel, once again. King Ahab became fixated upon the cotemporary false god of his time. By marrying Jezebel, a worshiper of Baal, the course became clear. By giving up God’s Word for a lie, Baal was to make life better. And why not? He was the Canaanite God of life based on the weather. This naturally led to the prophet Elijah having to flee Israel to the region of Sidon. It was here a widow generously received him into her home to see a miracle of life. While the false god Baal was put to shame by the God of Israel denying rain, drying up crops, and causing starvation. The widow and her son were sustained by the presence of Elijah and his word.

Unlike the judgment that rightly fell upon Israel for idolatry. When the widow’s son fell ill, there appeared to be no right answer. It is hard enough to fathom the pain of any parent losing a child. However, the greater challenge is how to sustain trust in God’s Word despite what we see. During the times of WWII, death was putting life to shame. More than that, Hermann Sasse a Lutheran Pastor noted, “But by and large we all act in the church as though Jesus Christ were not really present, as though he were further removed from our time than any other age in history of the church” (The Lonely Way Vol. 1 465). I am sure that the widow of Zarephath saw just as much hopelessness in her home. Yet, she had the Word and so do we, even more so now fully revealed by Jesus Christ. God’s Word is life and He meets us here to speak salvation.

What threatened God’s Word of life for the widow was death. She said, “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!” Death will always be the greatest call of repentance in this life. It was certainly the condemnation of Law felt by Israel for unrepentance to God. What threatened this widow was to do the same and turn away from Elijah. To take matters into her own hands as if the One True God never cared for her household. It meant no longer trusting the prophet of God’s Word by ridding her place of his presence. The weight of sin was self-evident being an outsider of Israel. Death was the rightful judgment, but that was never the reason Elijah took up residence with this widow. Out of love, the prophet made her painful problem his own saying, “Give me your son.”

Plenty of things try to stand against God’s Word and His Church today. It is similar to the false life offered by Baal to Israel. Yet, death remains the greatest threat we face each day. More than being drowned in debt, immorality, or loss of health the fact remains. Because we sin, we must face death. St. Paul said, “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). Most do not talk about such a topic as if that makes the truth less painful, which is never the truth. Others see so much loss of life in this world it just seems hopeless as if God does not care. Repentance is the only cure keeping us from false security in works or from rejecting the place of God’s Word for our life. Christ as Savior makes death His problem saying, “Do not weep.” Those baptized into His Name already face death in Him who has dared to die out love for sinners.

The truth is God does more than sustain by His Word, but wants to save life. Elijah more than giving a miracle for food became this woman’s mediator. Moses long ago declared to Israel of God, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” (Deut 32:39). So Elijah cried out in prayer, “O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?” He even used his own body as a means to convey healing from God for the widow’s son. Only compassion would keep the door open for sinners and Elijah came with such a request. The prophet’s words were heard by God and the boy’s life restored. God's grace, His undeserved favor, gave the miracle for Elijah to say, “See, Your son lives.”

The truth is we need a mediator, one to stand in-between death and life with a good word to save. This is not merely when the biological clock comes to zero, but what we need all the time if the wages of sin is death. St. Paul says, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all…” (1 Timothy 2:5-6). It means the redeeming work of Jesus removes the hopelessness of death over us. It means by the cross Jesus’ cried out for all sins so the sting of death does not reign supreme. It means by His death Jesus took into his body all death making life the miracle for all to believe in Him. This mediation of God’s Son still comes as the truth by His Word and Sacrament. He meets our world of death by bringing His unending life. See, you do not die, but live. Jesus comes with forgiveness for the fallen flesh, yields life to be in His Name and none other, and lets salvation squarely rest in Him who loves to save.

In response to her son, the widow bore witness to the power of life in God’s Word. “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth.” Death only proved God’s desire for life is far beyond just sustaining it in the world. He is gracious to gives us this day our daily bread, but His Word forgives with the purpose of eternal life. As the Psalmist declares, “The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands” (Psalms 138:8). God has a purpose driven life for us to look towards the resurrection of the body. Even now, this old Adam drowns daily and dies by baptism so the new Adam might arise in faith to God and love toward our neighbor. Once death is dealt with in Jesus life is at work in His saints. St. Paul tells us about himself, “They only were hearing it said, ‘He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”

God’s Word is life and He meets us here to speak salvation. The means of grace are God’s means of life to give faith in Him. This miracle has allowed His Church to survive throughout the ages. Reason cannot explain it. Authorities of man do not control it. Works have never secured it. The mystery hides in the presence of Christ truly active in this world. We simply give thanks and rejoice that He comes as promised by the Lord’s Supper. Because where Jesus is as the risen Lord and Savior, be certain He gives life by His Word even when facing death. Amen. Now May the peace of God which passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.