***1 Kings 17:9-16 “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.” 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink.” 11 And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, “Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” 12 So she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, 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.” 13 And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. 14 For thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.’ 15 So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. 16 The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah.***

This morning, we’re with Elijah as he approaches Zarephath. At the gate, he encounters a widow who is also a mother. She has a son. There’s a drought in the land. Food, water, and based on her response to Elijah, hope is in short supply. Yet, here she is, doing her best, as good mothers do, as many mothers in this room have done, as we remember our mothers doing. The widow teaches us four lessons and, though much time has passed since this encounter, these lessons still apply today: Be diligent, be charitable, be faithful, and be obedient.

Verse 9 says - *Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.* God tells Elijah to go to Zarephath and there he will meet a widow. Earlier, in verse 4, God commanded the ravens to feed Elijah, due to the drought and the famine in the land. Ravens were considered an abomination among the birds according to Leviticus 11:15. Yet, God used these birds to care for His prophet. Now, God sends Elijah to Zarephath, a Gentile city, filled with unclean Gentile people, and there God will use a Gentile woman to provide for Elijah.

Verse 10 says *So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, “Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink.”*Elijah is obedient and encounters a widow gathering sticks by the city gate. This suggests that she is very poor, so poor that she is gathering sticks for fuel by the gate. Here is our first lesson: Be Diligent. Mothers, be diligent in the things that matter. The widow is diligent, even in hard times. Too often, people spend time on things that don’t matter and ignore the things that do. A relationship with Christ matters. Reading the Bible matters. Setting a Christ-like example for children matters. Be diligent.

Verses 11-14, we overhear the conversation between the widow and Elijah. *And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, “Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.” So she said, “As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, 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 make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.’* Elijah now invites this mother, whose son is on the verge of starving, and she herself on the verge of dying to be Charitable, be generous. Our second lessons: Be generous, be charitable, not just with your children and family, but with others God brings to your path.

Elijah also invites this mother to be Faithful and believe God will provide. Our third lesson: Be Faithful. God told Elijah she’d provide. Now, she has a choice. Does she believe? Mothers, be Faithful, even when God hasn’t made the pathway clear. Listen to the Holy Spirit.

Verse 15 *So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days.*This mother has been diligent even when things looked hopeless, charitable, even when her household was suffering, and faithful, even as she knew the limits of so little flour and oil. Now, we learn our fourth lesson – Be Obedient. She is obedient and does according to the word of Elijah. It’s easy to be obedient in the good times of plenty. Mothers, be obedient, even in times of lack. Elijah said – do not fear, so we know she was scared. Too often, we spend our time arguing with God, rather than trusting and obeying Him.

How does all this turn out? The widow and her household are blessed. Verse 16- *The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah.* Her diligence, charity, faithfulness, and obedience brought her blessings. She and her son didn’t just eat one day, or a few days, but many days! The bin was not used up and the jar did not run dry. God blessed because He saw her diligence, charity, faithfulness, and obedience.

Mothers, and I have to add fathers, be of a faithful heart. Be diligent, charitable, faithful, and obedient. God knows our fears. He expects our trust. Happy Mothers Day to everyone today.