

READ: 1 Kings 17:1-16

Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe* in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.'²The word of the Lord came to him, saying, ³'Go from here and turn eastwards, and hide yourself by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁴'You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.'⁵So he went and did according to the word of the Lord; he went and lived by the Wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁶The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the wadi. ⁷But after a while the wadi dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

⁸ Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ⁹'Go now to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and live there; for I have commanded a widow there to feed you.'¹⁰So he set out and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the town, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called to her and said, 'Bring me a little water in a vessel, so that I may drink.'¹¹As she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, 'Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand.'¹²But she said, 'As the Lord your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of meal in a jar,

and a little oil in a jug; I am now gathering a couple of sticks, so that I may go home and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.'¹³Elijah said to her, 'Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son.'¹⁴For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.'¹⁵She went and did as Elijah said, so that she as well as he and her household ate for many days.¹⁶The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by Elijah.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Review

The first movement of the soul is from loneliness to solitude. Because we are created uniquely in God's image, everyone is in some way alone. The painful experience of this part of our human condition is called "loneliness." Embracing this truth and bringing our loneliness before God, like Elijah in 1 Kings 19, is the beginning of solitude: living from the fullness that we are loved and accepted just as we are. This prepares us to receive others *as they are* and not as a tool to avoid or solve our alone-ness. Silence is one important way we

can confront our anxious loneliness and cultivate solitude in God's loving presence.

Context

Each of the relationships we explore in the sermon series will intersect--none can be pulled apart entirely in our real lives. For example, how we experience ourselves has a huge impact on how we relate to others. And how we relate to others shapes how we experience ourselves. In Henri Nouwen's *Reaching Out*, he offers the poles of hostility and hospitality to describe how we relate to others.

Quotes

"Our essential work is not liberation from places or from others. It is, rather, to learn the art of hospitality, which welcomes, nurtures, and releases others into the fullness of their lives, so that our presence contributes to the healing and flourishing of all."
- Norman Wirzba

"Hospitality means primarily the creation of free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy... It is not to bring men and women over to our side, but to offer freedom not disturbed by dividing lines." - Henri Nouwen

"No real dialogue is possible between somebody and nobody." - Henri Nouwen

Big Idea

Hostility makes strangers into enemies, but hospitality makes strangers into friends.

Reflect

1. Read the scripture passage carefully and slowly. What word or image stands out to you? Why?

2. In the sermon, Michael offered that "hospitality has become synonymous with entertaining. But that is not what we are talking about here." How was the widow radically hospitable? Describe a time you experienced real or surprising hospitality.
3. Nouwen writes, "We can only perceive the stranger as an enemy as long as we have something to defend." What are some things you "defend" that might cause you to be hostile toward others?
4. What are some ways you can grow in hospitality in your life?

Engage

1. **Remember Hospitality** - journal about or silently recall a moment of unexpected or out-of-the-ordinary hospitality you received: from a friend, family member, or stranger. Send a "thank you," if you can, to this person.
2. **Practice Hospitality** - do you know who your neighbors are? Get hospitable by learning their names, bringing them a gift they might enjoy that also reflects who you are, or inviting them into your space for a visit.
3. **Pray Hospitality** - God who welcomes us, open our hearts to welcome you: in the people we see everyday, in the people who live in our home, in the friend we know so well. Soften our souls to sense the gifts you have prepared for us in each person we encounter. Give us courage to remain open, to remain receptive, to grow toward you. Amen.

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