

## Sermon for Proper 5 C 2010

We worship a God of foolhardy compassion.

A God who pursues us, embarrasses himself for us, gives himself for us.

And a God who invites us to live likewise, embarrassing ourselves, giving ourselves for his sake.

Elijah the Tishbite was a foolhardy follower of God.

The Lord gave him a threatening word for one of Israel's bad kings.

And he took it to him!

He went to Ahab, husband of Jezebel, and announced a three-year drought, that only a word from him could alleviate.

In danger from the king, God sent Elijah out into the desert, to hide in the Wadi Cherith, an oasis.

In the middle of a drought, the Lord sent him into a desert, and he went!

There he was fed by ravens who brought him bread and meat morning and evening.

Ravens: a combination of gross and unreliable.

Then the Lord sent him to Zarephath, to be cared for by a poor widow.

Elijah knew this was not a solid plan. Widows were poor!

And yet, again, he went.

Elijah shows us that faith in God is something akin to foolishness.

The faithful life of obedience to God is not well-judged or prudent.

Following God is a great risk.

For God may have more in mind for us that we can ask or imagine.

But the God who invites into the adventure of faithful living is a God who provides.

See how he gave Elijah and the widow to one another for their common good.

Elijah asked her to feed him; she resisted.

His dependence on God was a choice she made;

her dependence on God was forced upon her.

But their shared dependence on God nourished the.

But in the relationship between the two, God made a new thing happen.

The combination of her handful of meal, her little oil and his prophetic power meant that all were nourished for many days.

This is what happens when people are foolish for Christ's sake, when they depend on God, when they accept God's invitation to a surrendered life.

If we make ourselves available to God, God fills our lives in wonderful ways.

But chiefly by drawing us to others,

Who are on the same wild journey.

And this is the journey that God has so graciously condescended to share with us.

We so often think of God in the adjectives of the Greeks: omnipotent, omniscient, impassible, unchangeable.

Perhaps those are all quite true.

But God is also compassionate, willing to suffer with us, wanting to be with us.

That is the story the Bible tells, of a God who relentlessly seeks his people, even at great expense to himself.

In law, kings, and prophets, and finally in a beloved Son.

In the Gospel lesson, Jesus typically gets involved in a situation many of us would avoid.

He had a way of noticing these things.

A good Jewish man like Jesus did well to avoid unclean things.

But so often Jesus did not; his compassion led him.

HE ought not talk to women he did not know, but he walked up to this mourning woman.

And implored her not to weep.