

LENT IV - Wednesday, March 13, 2024

A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church Year B

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I Kings 17

⁸ The word of the HOLY ONE to Elijah was, ⁹ “Get up, go to Zarephath, which is part of Sidon, and settle there; watch now, I have commanded a widow woman there to provide for you.” ¹⁰ And Elijah got up and went to Zarephath. Then he came to the gate of the town, and look! a widow woman was there gathering sticks; so he called to her and said, “Bring me, please, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.” ¹¹ She went to bring it, and he called to her and said, “Bring me, please, a bit of bread in your hand.” ¹² Then she said, “As the HOLY ONE your God lives, if I had a cake. There is only a handful of flour in a jar, and a little oil in a jug. Now look, I am gathering two sticks, then I will go home and prepare the oil and flour for myself and for my child; we will eat it, and we will die.” ¹³ Then Elijah said to her, “Fear not; go and do as you have said, only make me a little cake of it and bring it to me first, then make something for yourself and your child afterwards.” ¹⁴ For thus says the HOLY ONE the God of Israel: The jar of flour will not empty and the jug of oil will not decrease until the day that the HOLY ONE grants rain upon the earth.” ¹⁵ She went and she did as Elijah said, and she and he, and her household, ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of flour did not empty and the jug of oil did not decrease according to the word of the HOLY ONE that God spoke through Elijah.

Psalms 145:8-10, 14-19

⁸ Full of grace and a mother's love is the MOTHER OF ALL,
slow to anger and abounding in faithful love.
⁹ The WOMB OF LIFE is good to all,
and her mother-love is upon all she has made.
¹⁰ They shall praise you, WELLSPRING OF LIFE, all your works,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
¹⁴ The MERCIFUL ONE upholds all who fall,
and raises up all who are bent over.
¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give to them their food at the right moment.
¹⁶ You open your hand,
and satisfy the desire of every living thing.
¹⁷ The FAITHFUL ONE is righteous in all her ways,
and loving in all her works.
¹⁸ The EVER-PRESENT GOD is near to all who call on her,
to all who call on her in truth.
¹⁹ The desire of all who revere her she fulfills;
and their cry she hears and delivers them.

1 Corinthians 3

¹ Now sisters and brothers, I could not speak to you all as spiritual, but rather as carnal, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you all with milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, ³ for you all are still carnal. Given there is still jealousy and discord among

you, are you not carnal, and going around as merely human? ⁴ For when one says, “I am Paul’s,” and another, “I am Apollos’s,” are you not merely human?

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Ministers through whom you came to believe, as the Messiah granted to each person. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God produces growth. ⁷ Therefore neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, rather it is God who produces growth. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters are alike, and each will receive wages according to their labor. ⁹ For we are God’s coworkers, working together; you are God’s cultivation, God’s construction.

Mark 8

¹ In those days there was again a great crowd of women, children, and men and they did not have anything to eat; Jesus called his disciples and said to them, ² “I have compassion for the women, children, and men, because they have remained with me for three days already and do not have anything to eat. ³ And if I send them on their way hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way, and some of them have come from far away.” ⁴ His disciples replied, “From where can anyone get loaves to feed these people here in the desert?” ⁵ Jesus asked them, “How many loaves do you all have?” They said, “Seven.” ⁶ Then he ordered the women, children, and men of the crowd to sit down on the ground and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks, he broke and gave them to his disciples in order that they might distribute them, and they distributed them to the women, children, and men. ⁷ They had also a few little fish and after blessing them, he ordered that these be distributed as well. ⁸ They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. ⁹ Now there were about four thousand women, children, and men. And he sent them on their way. ¹⁰ And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

¹¹ And the Pharisees came and began to debate with Jesus, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him. ¹² And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly I tell you all, no sign will be given to this generation.” ¹³ And he left them again getting into the boat, he went across to the other side.

¹⁴ Now they had forgotten to bring loaves of bread and except for one loaf they did not have any with them in the boat. ¹⁵ And Jesus instructed them, saying, “Look here! Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod.” ¹⁶ And they discussed among themselves that because of the lack of loaves he said it. ¹⁷ And becoming aware of it, Jesus said to them, “Why are you all discussing having no loaves? Do you still not perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened?

¹⁸ *Do you have eyes and fail to see? Do you have ears and fail to hear?*

And do you not remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand men, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” They said to him, “Twelve.” ²⁰ “And the seven for the four thousand women, children, and men, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you collect?” And they said to him, “Seven.” ²¹ Then he said to them, “Do you not yet understand?”

Text Notes

Psalm 145 uses the root *rchm*, derived from the womb, *rechem*, to articulate God’s feelings for Israel. Accordingly, in verses 8–9, I translate the sentiment as “mother-love” rather than the traditional “compassion,” which severs the link between the terms and their semantic range.

In this Gospel reading, “crowd” is amplified with “women, children, and men,” the constituent of elements of any crowd without other delimiters. Jesus quotes Jeremiah 5:21 in verse 18. In verse 19, I supply “men” as Mark 6:44 specifies that the crowd of five thousand was entirely comprised of male people.