

A little can be everything

Please read Psalm 146, as it will provide the frame for both readings.

These readings today have so much in common, and they have an intimate connection with Psalm 146, where clearly God's Kingdom vision is set before us, and what a different vision this is to what we usually see in the world.

The reading from 1 Kings once again shows us how in God's plan, an insider (=Elijah) is cared for by a poor foreign woman, an outsider, a widow who only has a son and is preparing for both to die. All this happens in the context of conflict between King Ahab (*who has done evil in the sight of the Lord*) and his wife Jezebel, who serves Baal, both are opposed by the prophet Elijah, who is on the run for his life. God sends the prophet to 'hostile territory,' the Phoenician city in Sidon, where Elijah meets this widow, and he hears from God that she will care for him.

When Elijah asks her for help, she points to nothingness - the little she has (v 12), barely enough for herself and her son, for their final meal. And yet Elijah urges this woman for help, that she will not be worse off by helping him. And she does - the jar of food is never empty; the jug of oil never runs dry. Provision comes from the least, the foreigner, the outcast.

Now, let us pay attention to what the gospel says. To begin with, Mark speaks a word of warning against the scribes; during the times of Jesus these were the official guardians of the holy text, and the traditions. And all through the Gospel they are presented as the enemies of what Jesus said and stood for, they are the ones out to kill him. Listen to Jesus and you won't be surprised why they hate him - they are the ones after privilege, banquets, best seats in the house. And Jesus says: *Don't be like them*, they live at the expense of the weak, the vulnerable, the outsider. ***If the Bible reading is to become alive and help us, we need to pause for a moment, and try to recognize similar situations in the world today.*** Where do we see this? Who are the "scribes" now, who live at the expense of the weak and vulnerable?

And after warning us about the scribes, Jesus sits in the synagogue right in front of the offering box and sees people making a racket with their heavy bags of money, so that people will hear, see, admire. Then Jesus directs our attention to a widow who drops in a 2p coin...and that is all she has. Like the widow in the previous reading, who gives all she had to feed Elijah. And Jesus tells us that this woman has given more than any noisy bag of money. Jesus says that her **little has become an everything**. This is the economy of the Kingdom, so different from the economy of the world. Not power but service, not accumulation but giving in love. There is something inherently wrong in the world economic system when we face the situation of the two women in the readings, which speaks of the situation of so many people in the world today, failed and ignored by those who could make a positive difference: refugees, victims of domestic violence, persecutions due to sexual orientation, religion, race; economic migrants, vaccine apartheid. That is not God's vision at all.

These readings remind us that the injustices of the world are not the will of God, because God's will is clearly to be a different reality, a reality where the widow, the orphan, the foreigner show us God's priorities. This is why I asked you to go to Psalm 146 sometime today and read it as either opening or closing of these readings. **The world needs to see this love in action, and we must do it.** Amen