

Keeping the Jar Full

Sermon outline by Rev. Steven Gunther
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1. The Story (1 Kings 17)

- Elijah prophesies a drought → famine sets in.
 - Stream dries up → Elijah sent to Zarephath.
 - Widow with only **a handful of flour and a little oil**.
 - Elijah asks for water and bread.
 - Widow fears she doesn't have enough.
 - Miracle: The flour and oil never run out for many days.
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2. What the Story Represents

- **Famine** → a lack of truth. (AC 4844, 1460, 3364)
 - **Widow** → goodness longing for truth. (AC 9198)
 - A common human state:
 - We want to do what is good.
 - But we don't know *how*.
 - Our heart is willing, but the "truth" (knowledge, clarity, confidence) is lacking.
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3. Concrete Examples

- **Parenting:**
 - “I want to be a good parent...but I don’t know if I’m doing it right.”
 - **Supporting a loved one:**
 - “I want to help them...but I don’t know what to say or do.”
 - Fear stops us:
 - “What if I make it worse?”
 - “What if I don’t have enough wisdom?”
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4. Elijah’s Words: “Do Not Be Afraid.”

- Elijah asks her to *use what she has* anyway.
 - She gives from her little—and discovers it is enough.
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5. What the Elements Mean

- **Water** → truth.
- **Flour** → *truth from good*:
 - Life experience
 - Lessons learned through living
- **Oil** → “good of love” – love and motivation to do what’s right.

- **Making a cake** → combining:
 - Your experience
 - Your loving intention
→ and putting it into use for someone else.
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6. The Message for Us

- Don't wait to be an expert before doing good.
 - Use the flour (your experience) + oil (your desire to love).
 - Small, simple acts carry us through *until the Lord's deeper truths arrive*.
 - These acts prepare us to understand the Lord's Word more deeply later.
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7. The Broader Teaching (Arcana Coelestia 4197)

- People who lack divine truth but *act from goodness*
 - have a kind of good is “not aligned” but that can be opened.
 - When truth is later given, their goodness blossoms.
 - Same for us: our small good actions open us to deeper truth.
 - Our experience will help us identify life applications later when we read the Lord's Word
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8. Application

When you feel:

- “I want to do the right thing, but I don’t know what that is.”
 - **Do not be afraid.**
 - Use what you *do* know from experience.
 - Do something small and good:
 - A hug
 - A text saying “I’m thinking of you”
 - Sitting with someone
 - Taking your child for ice cream
 - Small acts of charity can be miraculous.
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9. Closing Message

- Take your “flour and oil”—your experiences and your love—
- And put them to use.
- Those small acts of goodness sustain us
until the rains come
—until deeper truth flows in and fills our jar again.

Amen.