

**SCARBORO UNITED CHURCH**  
**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2009**  
**SERMON PREACHED BY**  
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**“RISK AND OPPORTUNITIES”**

Do you enjoy taking risks? Are you excited by new opportunities in your life? Risks and opportunities are a part of everyone's daily life. The relative upside and downside of the risks and opportunities vary for each person; however each of us have decisions with outcomes (positive and/or negative) to make each day. All of us are like the three individuals identified in the stories; we are presented with opportunities. Elijah was asked by God to move to a new community and he was promised support. The widow in Kings was commanded by God to be welcoming. The widow in Mark contemplated whether she or the church was better off with her two cooper coins. Let us look at the parallels of decision-making today based Elijah and the two widows.

Elijah was presented with the opportunity to move to a new community and was promised support. There must have been a number of questions about the opportunity. What are the chances he will find the support of the widow upon his arrival? Will he be welcomed? Can he make the journey, and does he know how to get to Zarephath? However, even with the risks, Elijah moved to Zarephath. Today, Calgary is like Zarephath. Many people like Elijah have moved to Calgary in pursuit of a new community and support. I have noticed a greater diversity in people by overhearing different languages on the pathways and in the grocery stores. I was one of those people in pursuit of new opportunities in late 2003 when I moved to Calgary from Saskatoon. In my instance, I committed to moving to Calgary before I had a job. Both my parents questioned my actions to commit to life in Calgary without an income. My girlfriend at the time and now partner, Cher, was living and studying in Calgary. I remember feeling calm about my decision to move and that I wasn't alone. I have always had faith that God is with me on my life journey. I believe my faith in God and in myself helped bring this sense of calm as I approached my move to Calgary. I am also willing to guess that Elijah too, had a sense of calm about his decision to go Zarephath. As God presented the opportunity to Elijah, God was also with Elijah on his journey to meet the widow in Zarephath.

In God's communication to Elijah in Kings, God noted that a widow was commanded to feed him. This widow must have been tremendously scared and frightened of this command from God. Here she was, just about out of food and God has commanded her to welcome and host a stranger with her minimal food supply. This story reminds me of a scene in the true story movie titled "The Pursuit of Happiness." The main character, Chris Gardner, is homeless and has only about \$17 cash left to his name. One of the senior partners in the firm asks Chris to lend him \$5 for a cab fare. Chris Gardner appears mortified and hesitant to answer the request. The precious money is stared at before Chris digs into his wallet and graciously lends the \$5 to the senior partner. Chris Gardner exhibits faith by helping someone else out and a belief that he would be paid back and taken care of. I imagine that the widow in Kings was also devastated with Elijah's request for her remaining food. However, Elijah reassures her that the food supply will not run out and offers hope to the widow and her family by having faith in God. She then agrees to welcome and feed Elijah.

Thirdly, the widow in Mark contemplated whether she or the church was better off with her two cooper coins. What a frightening decision to give up all her money and rely on others. This mindset of relying on others is becoming more foreign to people today. Today, we as people are focused on being self-sufficient, watching reality TV and surfing on the internet. We as people are constantly being reminded to save for our retirement, not to lose all our money, buy insurance, be independent, purchase goods and to increase our disposable

income. The demands of society have created a cycle of working harder to generate more disposable income to spend at the expense of time with family, friends and community. Or said slightly differently, this cycle promotes the disposal of income and capital in pursuit of excess at the expense of human interaction. This can be a costly pursuit.

My father made some observations a few years ago as he retrained to be a health care aid and observed a number of individuals in their later years. Upon starting to work at a long-term health care facility in Beausejour MB, Dad noticed that some residents had visitors and others had no visitors. Dad learned that the difference in visitor attendance was based on how the resident had invested in relationships and treated people throughout life. People who respected others and made time for others had visitors; however those who were rude, unhappy, pursued money over friends and family had no visitors. Based on Dad's observations he offered the following comment to our family: "If you want to have visitors when you are older, you had better be real nice to the people in your life today so that those people might take the time to come and visit you later in life. It is my guess that the Widow had come to a similar conclusion. To move forward with her life, she needed to invest outside herself. She must have faith in God to overcome the fears of giving away her last two copper coins and become dependant on others in the community.

Both stories today promote opportunities and risks. I believe that there was a two-way relationship between God and the people in the stories and in life today. God calls us to be ourselves and work through the risks associated with our opportunities. As Win Borden once said: "If you wait to do everything until you are sure it's right, you'll probably never do much of anything."

Please remember, whether you are preparing for a move, sharing the last of what you have, donating all of what you have or taking action out of your comfort zone; God is with you on your journey, we are not alone!

Amen