Sermon: **The widow went and did as Elijah had told her** (1 Kings 17.15)

Frustrating – stories in Bible omit so much. What did Elijah wear/look like? Was he grumpy or jolly, or what? But we often ignore what *is* there. Elijah at Cherith (1/2 way between Galilee & Dead Sea), walks to Zarephath (c120k) to a Mediterranean coastal foreign town. Long journey when weak, well out of his comfort zone, leaving his life in the hands of some random foreign widow.

I want to focus on the widow’s point of view – notice that she is not even dignified by being named.

Was there drought in Zarephath? Knowing that folk tended to care for each other maybe it was; she is a desperate widow with one son (how old?). Imagine her plight.

A foreign man asks for hospitality – water - but being so weak, why does she take any notice?

Asking for water may have seemed trivial, but if there was a drought… Then he asks for food too.

She tells her story, (knowing how desperate she is, why does he not ask someone else?) but she still does as Elijah asks. Why? His reassurance? Too weak to argue? “I’m going to die anyway”? Hospitality?

Or was it compassion? (= to suffer with); whole story hinged on this compassion.

Compassion motivates a lot of what church does. Pastoral care, Brown Bags, Friday Club, Story Room.

True in personal life too? Giving to charity, prayer, nursing. Without compassion what are we?

In compassion we sense the other’s pain, trying to enter it, seeing the other’s point of view.

Limits? eg when tired, needing help ourselves, not enough money, time constraints.

Maybe there are some folk we would not show compassion to – bludgers, paedophiles, moaners, leeches?

Jesus had a heart of compassion – raising of Lazarus, lepers healed, adulterous woman forgiven.

Jesus suffers with people and calls us to suffer with him on the cross, so that our compassion may be reignited. As we look at Jesus, we see God. As others see compassion in us, they too see God.