

**Soup – Remembering Linda Wilkins**  
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When I grieve someone's death, I tend to write their funeral sermon. Sometimes it's just in my head, like Berf's, and sometimes I want to offer it to the family hopefully as a balm in a gaping hole.

So I offer this to Linda's family, friends, and all others touched by her.

*1 Kings 17*

*So Elijah went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?"*

*As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread." "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."*

*Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son."*

*For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.'*"

*She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family.*

I made potato soup last night as an offering to Linda. I didn't scorch it or add too much pepper.

Linda did not approve of pink Christmas tree cookies or substandard soups. She wanted things done the way she wanted them. We butted heads sometimes over whether hospitality should trump perfection, but she was wise enough to know pink cookies and scorched soups don't sell.

Linda fed me many meals, held my babies, and carried the singing for the whole church at times. She also carried a great many burdens, regrets, and sorrows so I won't try to turn her into some kind of angel who never struggled.

No, when I think of Linda I think of the widow of Zarephath. A woman who encountered the word of God, scraped together what she had, and kept making meals. I love that image of the woman gathering the last of her resources and then trusting God's grace to feed another instead of herself. I'm not sure I'm up for that challenge, but Linda rose to it time and again.

Or perhaps the best image for the gift of Linda's life and ministry is that of soup. Soup night at our house is much like casserole night. It is when I gather the scraps of stuff left in the fridge and blend it with a mix of spices and broth to turn it into one more meal. Sometimes it works out well and sometimes we need lots of hot sauce.

But that is the gift of soup. It is the gathering of resources that might otherwise be thrown out or ignored, throwing them all together in one pot with a dash of love and a bit of spice to make yet one more meal. And Linda was the queen of soup.

I know she will be greatly missed. She held so many things together, but our trust is that she isn't the hostess of the eternal feast. God is the great soup maker, who pulls us all together even if others would toss us aside, and makes a feast. I'm sure Linda will have some tips for God to make it a little tastier, but she will finally get to rest at the soup luncheon that has no end.

