

Elijah

by Robert Arthur

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life surrendered to God and trusting in His power to transform our lives.

Duration: 39:42

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:1-6, Matthew 6:33, Luke 4:25-26

Topics: "Elijah"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living a life centered around Jesus Christ. He highlights the need for a deep understanding of morals, decency, and truth in today's society. The preacher tells the story of a widow woman in Garapath who encounters the prophets of God. Despite her limited resources, she offers them water and a small cake, demonstrating her willingness to give what little she has. The sermon encourages the audience, particularly the younger generation, to recognize that God desires their lives and wants to fill them with His presence.

Transcript

My heart was rejoicing much in what our brother ministered to us now. I wonder if I might ask you today to turn to 1 Kings, Chapter 17, for a little portion that's there. But all with longs to step into the screen of the thoughts of another, and I do trust that there might be something of similar being in this.

I wonder if in verse 1, 1 Kings, 17, and Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dune or rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Kirith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord. For he went and dwelt by the brook Kirith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook.

It came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, and get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zion, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

And he arose and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks, and he called to her and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in mine hand.

She said, Does the Lord thy God liveth? I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruz. And behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. Elijah said unto her, Fear not, go and do as thou hast said.

But make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after, make for thee and for thy son. And for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruz of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah, and she and he in her house did eat many days, and the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruz of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which is spake by Elijah.

Now I'm sure that God will send his word to our hearts. Sometimes when I say to speak from God's precious word, I remember with some real delight my aged friend and brother, Mr. E.G. Matthew. We attended his funeral the other week and a few weeks ago now.

He's in the glory today. He's been at such conferences as these. Ninety-one years passed over his head, and I believe with some measure of satisfaction, he's gone into the presence of the Lord.

But you know, Mr. Matthew, as many another of us on occasion, had days when we may not have been all together at ease in the Scripture. I've preached quite a little while. I'm still mystified by the matter of those days that come upon you when it seems that after adequate preparation and you've prayed, nevertheless, nothing will go.

It seems that you just are beating the air. And Mr. Matthew must have had some of those days, too, because I once heard him say, actually, he'd had a bad day. Well, I read good Scriptures anyhow.

So I read good Scriptures no matter what there may be said about them. My dear brother was speaking of life and the fact that life is not necessarily our alone made up of length of days. By the way, we're old-fashioned enough to believe that time is divisible equally.

We have a clock. It ticks off seconds. They all seem alike, the same measure of time.

But somebody as well remarked this, that the measure of time is how much of the soul's experience has gone into any portion of it. Sometimes we read about so-and-so having a big moment. Well, I think that may be more true than we thought it was.

There may be moments that are longer because they have more of the soul's experience in them than other moments may have. I hope we've all had that big moment when the soul has been brought into the presence of the living God through our Lord Jesus Christ and we've reached into eternity and linked up with Christ. Now, I thought I would speak about, and perhaps more to young folk who are here today.

I'll speak about an incident in the Old Testament when the man of God Elijah is brought face-to-face with circumstances. I'm not going to treat of him particularly as a man, although I dare to think that he went through Keres and Zarephath. He went through the place of teaching.

He went through the school of experience. He went through the refinery, for such is the word, Zarephath. But it's not of that I speak.

I'd rather imagine that in the story I have before me, in a little likeness, he suggests to me our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me tell you why. Elijah comes on the scene.

You don't know where he's from. Well, he's from Zarephath. He's from Elijah the Tishbite, and Tishbe might have been a village, I suppose it was.

But so far as knowing who his parentage was, it isn't told us. None of us knows his lineage. He just comes on the scene, and there he is.

Now, I take it that he's somewhat pictorial of Christ in that regard. Christ comes on the scene, and so far as he's quite like Melchizedek. Melchizedek, in the book of Genesis, suddenly appears.

And you don't read of him anymore. And it's as though, because of his fit and lonely age, and knowing why he's always there. So that the ministry of Christ in the glory today is likened to that of Melchizedek, without beginning and without end of day.

Well, Elijah comes on the scene. And then you remember how he goes off the scene. He's translated.

Taken up. Of course, our blessed Lord was similarly taken up, only after he had gone through the sorrows of Calvary, and up on resurrection morn. But here are the two end points, the term and I, of Elijah.

He comes, and then he's translated. And, I suggest, he's quite like our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the impact of Christ on life is what makes this life.

Again and again, my dear brother Carl, remarks the fact that life is not the cup with its contents for me. It's the overflow. Life is not merely the enjoyment of things.

It is how much of a challenge there has been and a response to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Now, down in a place called Zarephath, there was a widow woman. The scriptures always are delightful to my heart.

In the chapter before, chapter sixteen, there's the story of a king who went down to the country of Sidon, and he got a princess. Thank you so much, my brother Francis. It's one of the greatest needs of the moment.

A dry creature is somewhat worse than anything I can tell. You remember that the king called Ahab had gone down to this country called Sidon, and he had gotten a princess there. Now, princesses are usually looked upon as personalities that are rather high.

We've all heard about a princess in these last days who has just been married and had that dazzled eye that we've been hearing about also. And this princess, however, was the daughter of wickedness, and she lived up to a man. And between them, the story is one of abounding wickedness.

There is little more that we can read of the wickedness than the record of the production of the wine Ahab and his Zarephath. By the way, young folks, that leads me to a thought that sin is a factor that can take a princess and plunge her low. But in the next chapter, a man, pictured, I'm suggesting, of Christ, goes down and he finds a widow.

I don't know that she was poor. I don't know that she was destitute. It looks as though she were.

I don't know many of the facets of her character, but it seems as though she were low. Can he lift it her up? Sin can take the high and plunge it low. Grace can take the low and lift it high.

There's nothing sweeter in all of the annals of God's dealings with lives than the record of a widow woman who gave up everything she had to the man that pictures Christ. And her life becomes the record of a continuance of eternity. She goes on, and what she has done lingers as long as this book is open.

I tell you, young folks, these be days in which the awfulness of sin lives well to be marked again and again as it confronts everyone of your life. Sin will make its pretenses. It will advertise itself as something that is satisfying.

Have you noticed this? I'm sure you well have. The sins of this broad world of ours that say, reach for such and such, they satisfy. And full well you know they don't satisfy.

Because of dissatisfaction and awe, they don't satisfy. Sin never satisfies. But none satisfy but our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Now none but Christ can satisfy. What a part that sin has played in my own particular experience in life. But now here's the story of grace.

By the way, it is that kind of a story. I don't need to argue that for those who know the gospel by Luke. Because on the fourth chapter of Luke, when our blessed Lord, on that first Sabbath in Nazareth, stood up in the synagogue, he made reference to this very widow.

He says there were many widows in Israel, but unto none of them was Elias his son, save unto a widow of Sarathah of Zion. And that is enough to tell the religious Israelites then hearing him, that God's grace many times goes over the heads of religious folk and reaches the Gentiles, as it did to that dear widow that day. So it's a story of grace.

A story of God's dealing with folk that don't deserve what he does for them. And so it can be taken by every one of us today. Now the narrative is just this.

The man of God, a picture of Christ, presents himself in the forefront of the light. And it's a famine time, just like this is a famine time. I believe there's a famine, a paucity, a dirt of the realities of life all across.

My dear young folk, I feel so deeply concerned for you as you grow up now and then. I feel that there's wanting in our days, the common basic element, the understanding of what morals and decency and truth and uprightness are. And you're growing up in that very atmosphere.

Breathing it in. And once and again I insist it has to be cried out to our generation, that God wants your life. God wants your life.

And he wants to fill it with so much of himself. Here's how the story works out. The prophet's been told to go down there.

God says there's a widow woman that I want to cross your path. He comes down to the widow woman. And he says to her as they meet there at the city gate, Oh, could you bring me a little water to drink? Water was a scarcity.

She turns to get it. I don't know where she would get it. And as she goes, he says, Oh, oh, I'm saying, will you bring me a little, a little morsel of bread? Bread.

That's just the thing I don't have, she said. The truth of the matter is this. I've been out with my son now, gathering a couple of little sticks, and we've got a handful, one lone handful of meal of flour in the bottom of our barrel.

And we've got a little oil. I don't know what kind of oil it would be. Wesson oil, or whatever it was.

I don't know. And she says, we'll just put that. And we're going to mix it up and make our cake.

And now we're looking for a couple of sticks. And after we've set the cake on a little fire, we're going to eat our cake, and we're going to die. Now, you'll notice what the man of God says.

The man of God said, I'm very conscious that you've told me the truth, that you don't have a cake, but you've got the making of one. And it's your last one. And after that, you're going to eat it and die.

Now, he says, you go through the procedure you've outlined to me. You make your cake, get your stick, go in, set it on. But then, instead of eating it, give it to me.

That's crazy, isn't it? Give it to me, take the bite out of your own mouth, and give it to me, and you'll die a moment earlier. Oh no, no, that's not what he says. Instead of your dying, there will be conferred on this cake, and on you, something of lastingness that will not go down.

Now, just a word or two about many a feature of this little story. I suppose the widow, and widows is a picture of dependence on need, helplessness, her stay in staff, her posse has been taken away, she's alone. A widow is a very excellent picture of script, inscription on, of aloneness, and perhaps because of that, God uses widows to portray the very highest that there is in many a way.

You remember our blessed Lord stood over against the treasury one day. He's always standing over against the treasury. He's still noting what people did.

And there came in by him, a widow woman. And she cast into the treasury two mites, which are the half of a farthing. Now, I don't know what actually the Palestinian farthing was worth.

I know what a British farthing's worth. Four of them to a penny. And they're not very large, and with the increase of values, with inflated values, they become decreasingly worth, and a farthing's almost worthless.

She had half of a farthing, and she cast it into the treasury. And our blessed Lord with his scrutinizing eye, he said, she put in more than they ought. Now, now, how could that be? She put in a half a farthing.

Here was the man of wealth coming by. He cast in a hundred dollars, or fifty, or ten. And you say, a half of a farthing is more than they put in? Yes, indeed.

Because, you'll bear with me, won't you? It's old knowledge to many of us. But you see, in the matter of giving to God, he doesn't measure by what you put in. He measures by what you have left.

You have a, you have a bank book of much, and you give ten dollars to God. Well, if you have nine hundred and ninety left, you haven't given so much. But the woman gave everything.

And the measure of her giving was greater than they ought. Now, there was another with a woman to whom Christ brought some attention, and she's called the importunate widow regarding her praying. She prayed, and prayed, and prayed.

You see, she was helpless. She had none to whom to come, so to speak. And she came to this Lord, appealing to Him.

And, uh, the unfortunate widow ranks as the best in praise. The best in giving, the best in praise. Here's a woman, and I take it that she's the best in devotion.

The best in yielding up her life to God. Now you say, whoa, before you hurry so fast, where does the life come in? Well, I know she was a widow and older, and had a son. But I wonder if she might not have been somewhat in the likeness of a person who could say, well, I don't have my life all made yet, but here's my life cake.

Here's the makings of my life. I don't have a cake already formed, but here's the makings of it. Here's a little flour, and a little oil.

And I'm going to have my cake pretty soon. What are you going to do with your life cake? Oh, I'm going to eat it. Now, two or three things about life, young folks.

What are you putting into your life cake? What are your ingredients? You've got a handful of flour, and you've got a little oil. Well, what else are you putting in? I know young lives today that are putting into life amazing things, and they wonder after a while why the cake looks the way it does after it turns up. This is, for example, the ingredient of sauce.

Their thoughts run all the while to the worldly and the superficial and even the evil. And I know this, young folks, that a day will dawn when some of you will stand aghast and say, I didn't mean my life to come to this. And yet you put into the making of the cake the very thought processes that were bound to come out the way they are.

You know what's tragic to think of in our day? I often say in a bit of humor, suppose in the early spring I do a bit of gardening. I once did. I had quite a garden and somebody pushed it off the window sill, but I, suppose I'm gardening in the spring and I toss this thing over.

I don't want your commonplace beans and tomatoes and so on, so I plant red peppers. And I just plant ever so many of them. Well, the days pass, the time comes for me to collect, and I go out to my garden and red peppers meet me everywhere.

Now I say, I wish I had some real, old-fashioned green beans. So I say, oh Lord, give me some green beans. And I pull over my garden and I say, oh Rick, my red peppers just keep on being red peppers and I don't get green beans.

And you say, well, since I have to tell you, man, that you planted red peppers and that's what will come out. And do you know that there are lives today that wring their hands and they wonder after certain things come out and they say, oh, I never meant my life to be this. Why don't I have green beans? You planted red peppers.

You planted thoughts of a kind that were productive of evil and nothing else can come out of them but that very thing. Oh, I tell you, there are laws, inviolable laws, about sowing and reaping. Just that will come up in your life that you've been putting into.

Oh, I know there's a process called conversion and God is gracious and he often can undo the results of certain things but the law of sowing and reaping stands. You sow and you reap what you sow. What are you putting in your life cake? The figures perhaps are odd but the element of central idea is the same.

You put in your cake certain things and they'll be in the finished article. Now, when you notice this too about cake, life cake, this woman said another truth about it. She said, I've just got one to make.

It's going to be a small one. It's all that I have, the making of one cake. That's all you have, young folk.

Oh, I like sometimes to read that little motto, only one life. So soon they pass, that's all you have. It's not long or big at the latter end.

I was recalling and only with haste as I sat there in my seat, some of the things that men have said about life. David, do you remember he said this? We spend our days as a tale that is told. That phrase, the tale that is told, it is not fair, it's metallic.

We spend our days as a tale, but somebody will say, as a sigh. That's all the length of life, and that life is over. Job speaks about life as a weaver's shuttle, shuttle that goes back and forth, a brief little thing.

James speaks about life being asleep. James says your life is a vapor. Vapor is not very tangible, somebody will say.

I wonder if James didn't have many about in mind there. Vapor, you know, as we see it pass by, could be so potential for dropping fruitfulness on the earth. Maybe our lives could be that, but I'm speaking now of the brevity of them.

Life is a small thing, and it's just singular, there's only one of it. And remember this, that whatever we put in your case, that's what's going to come out in the end. Like I said, I'm going to get a couple of sticks and see that my cake act has been mixed up and is going to be baked.

I'm not too much of a baker, in fact, what I know of it would be very little indeed. But I do deem it that cakes need something called conversion. The action of fire has to come in and the cake in its soft element has to be converted and cooked and there it is.

You remember this, that in Hosea God said to his people once, Ephraim, thou art a cake not turned, you're half-baked. I don't mean to say to anybody you're half-baked in the way we use it very colloquially and slangly, but you know what half-baked cakes are? It's the suggestion that your life isn't through and through. You've made your mixture all right and the heat as it were, the fires of conversion came on it, but life isn't altogether through.

Oh, my dear young folks, I could plead with the very utmost of intensity that's in my being. Today we're asked to see the spectacle so often. Our lives are made a profanity of Christianity and are half-baked.

One half has had the fire, so to speak, the other half is just as it was according to nature. It ought not so to be. We have to be all for God through and through.

A half-baked cake, a gooey mixture in the pocket of it, is an unpalatable thing. I think that's why people don't take hold of Christianity. They've seen so many half-cooked cakes, so to speak, and they're not palatable and they're no credit to their maker.

I noticed this with my wife. My wife has a failure and she's not here and I may say they come very, very seldom and our boys like eating the failures, you know, when you can scoop it with a spoon. But I know this about failures.

My wife likes to cover it up and doesn't like it to be brought on to the know. Oh, you boys leave that later on. That's not going on the table tonight for our company.

A failure, a half-baked cake is no credit to its maker. And certainly men and women are not going to be responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ, responsive to Christ. When they see lives that profess to be Christian and they're not fully given up, certainly.

Now, I see time passing and I just want another word or two. It's all very small and simple that we have to say today. This woman said something and I suppose every life has to say it.

I'm going to take my cake ingredients, mix them up, cook my cake, bake it. Then, I'm going to eat it and die. Isn't it my cake? Isn't it my life? Can I do with it what I please? Isn't it for me to consume it upon myself? So is the thinking of men and women about life.

Is that how you think about things, young folks? Somebody says, after all, all the folks who lived your life, you can surely leave it up to us to make our own choices. I'm going to educate my life. I'm going to do this, that with it, shape it, put it in the mold, the pan of certain things.

By all means, do that. I hope that the shape of your cake is one of the loveliest things. I hope that if in God's goodness and grace it's allowed to you that you'll educate your life, you'll be able to go along in a full way with the matter of giving your life its shape.

But look, before you conclude that the actual purpose of your life is to consume it upon you, I want you to notice something. My dear brother was speaking of this very thing. Life isn't for you.

Life isn't for you to hurry through and enjoy a few things. By the way, life is for God. Life's for God.

He's giving it to us, and you'll only get the best out of it if you give it back to Him. Look what the man of God said. He said, yes, my dear woman, take your cake, mix it up, bake it, put it on the fire, as you said.

But look, instead of eating it and consuming it upon yourself and dying, give it to me, and let me. Oh, I like that. Would you like, my dear listener today, one of the simpler pieces of spiritual and moral advice that I think is to be gathered from the word of God? Your life will never be so much yours as when you give it up to God.

One of the paradoxes. Was it not Sir John Bunyan that said, there was a man, no sum did count in man. The more he gave away, the more he had.

It's true with life. It's never yours until it's given to God. Ye are not your own.

Ye are God with a price. And when you give it to God, that is Lord. Ah, then, then it is conserved its purest purpose.

And not until then. Did you notice this? That whenever this life, this cake was given up to the man of God, a touch of eternal things came on. A handful of meal, a little oil.

This should have been used up in the last cake, and eaten, and that was it. But it never worked. They went back to the same bell, oh, another handful.

Oh, a little oil. The touch of eternity came over. The indigenous.

And beloved, I dare say it's exactly that way with life today. Life given to our blessed Lord has the touch of eternity put upon it. Ah, but somebody says, look, this little woman gave up a life cake and it wasn't much, but you don't know what I have.

It's left still. I've got nothing of any worth to offer to Christ. I have no talent.

I have no anything. I'm an angel. I disagree.

I disagree. I think the experience and evidence of God's dealings with man is just this. The few of the great ones put themselves into the hand of God.

Not many, mighty not, not many noble are called, but when God takes up a common thing, a little thing, God can use that little thing to the glory of His days. I've told a little story often. It's a very holy little thing.

It seems that a little chap, just like so many of our little chaps, had learned to play with one finger on the piano. He just could pound out just a very few notes. They took a little nature of a tune, Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eats.

They could play it with one finger, one finger tune. And it seemed that on every occasion and sometimes between occasions he would play his little piece. One day Mother was going somewhere.

Teacher was going to a little function that was to entertain a celebrity. A musician, no less, coming to town. And the dinner prepared for him.

And the banquet room quite lavishly laid. And up at the top of the room, the table for the great man and the leaders. And a piano, of course.

And Mother is here and she's speaking with others and passing the time of day and doing what mothers do, you know, speaking of what they speak of. And without noticing it, the little chap got away from her side. You know what happens in the best of families.

And there in a moment when she saw him, he was just about to sit down at the piano. Right by the table of the great man. And there he went at it.

Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eats. But there it was and she couldn't get to him before she did anyhow. The man apparently rose from the table and went over to him and spoke to him.

She could just imagine what he was saying. What is that, son? Don't you know that? That's Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eats. Never heard it before.

Would you like to play it again? Play it again. That's what I'm waiting for. And he played again in peace.

And then said the great man, Would you let me join in with you this time? Would you play it? Why, why? And the great man put his hands over the little fellow and they played Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eats. And the listener said he'd never heard anything like it. For a little pudgy finger was put in the hand of the master musician and they played that little bit of a pumpkin eater talent.

For that pumpkin eater talent was put in the hand of the master. I became something worth listening to. You know, I dare to think that that the common places of life are still awaiting the touch of God's grace and goodness.

The least of life put into the hand of Christ can be something useful and for His glory. I'm overthrew. Did you notice this? Something I like to linger on for a moment.

It says that rather than eat and die, he and she and the household all went on through famine days and they never lacked. It means that not only was the woman sustained through giving up her cake, but others around her that would have gone down in death too. They were sustained.

Do you know, young folks, there might be lives a way out in darkest Africa today. There might be some corner still of the beloved strip out yonder in Angola or somewhere where there are lives that will never know Christ. They'll go down in spiritual death unless your life is given into the hand of the blessed Lord Himself.

So He can not only touch your life with eternal touch, but through your life and through what you yield to Him. There may be others who know the joy of eternal life. May the Lord bless this little word to your waiting house.

If you be one, I, if you be older and not younger, and still your life has been shaped to the end of satisfying only you, may I say this today that Christ can take the life that's put into His blessed hand and He can touch it and He can yield it to His praise and His glory and He will if you are willing to have Him do so. Again, Mike B. Sand and the same two verses of the song, number 247. The first and the fourth verses of number 247.

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