

Come Follow Me
Elo Viz production
Week 27
1 Kings 17-19

There are a lot of jaw dropping events packed into these 3 chapters. Let's recap quickly and then look at some principles contained in these stories that can help us live better lives.

This story actually begins several years earlier after the death of David the son of Jesse. His son Solomon takes over and like David he tried hard to be a good King at least at first. But it was Solomon that started the Children of Israel down the path of Idol worship. Especially in his later years with his many wives pulled his heart away from God and into dark paganism. When he died his Son just picked it up where he left off. So it was a long spiral downward until Elijah comes onto the scene. By this time the 12 tribes were divided into two kingdoms; the northern 10 and the southern 2 tribes known as Juda. Each had their own king. In the Northern kingdom since the death of Solomon there were 8 kings and they were all evil. Dragging the Children of Israel farther and farther away from God. In the days of Elijah King Ahab reigned. The scriptures tell us that he was the worst of all of them mostly because of who he married, a historical figure by the name of Jezebel. These two together did more for the destruction of Israel than any other character in all the Bible so far in our studies. In fact things get so bad that God sends one of the greatest, most boldest prophets we have seen; Elijah the tishbite.

Now you might be wondering where is the city of Tishbi, and why it is important? And that is exactly the point. No one knows where Tishbi is. It was a city of no significance with no special reputation for producing anything. Elijah had no royal blood line, or familial heritage of spiritual things. But he was bold. The first time we hear of this great prophet he is standing before King Ahab and in chapter 17 verse one he says:

“As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.”

He commands a famine in the land. We then read that he is fed by God with the use of Ravens. Two meals a day: meat and bread morning and evening. This is an important lesson that we will come back to. Ravens in their day were similar to Crows in our day. Gross, pesky, rodent type foul that they considered unclean. It's interesting to see who and what God uses in these times; It wasn't because he lacked the ability to use other birds. He used ravens for a purpose. And we will see this lesson again very shortly.

After the brook dries up God sends Elijah to the city of Zarephath because he has commanded a widow woman there to sustain him. I'm sure you recall the wonderful story of faith from this incredibly trusting woman. You know, the one about Elijah commanding her to bring him some water and as she was going he asks for some bread also. She responds with a heart wrenching plea that all she has left is a little meal in a barrel and a little oil in a cruze. She was out there gathering sticks to make a small fire so she could make one last meal for her and her son before they die of starvation. Then God blesses both Elijah and this Woman with a marvelous miracle of a barrel of meal that won't waste and a cruze of oil that won't run out.

There are two very important lessons to be learned from this account. The first is related to the last about the Ravens. Who this woman is and where she is living is of great significance.

She is living in the City of Zarephath. Zarephath was the hub, the center of Idol worship in those days. God knew this, and he was making a point. Just as he used the most unlikely bird to feed Elijah near the brook he is also going to use the most unlikely woman in the worst possible city. Jesus himself emphasized this lesson in Luke chapter 4 when he taught:

“I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of [Elijah], when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was [Elijah] sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow.”

This a pattern that we see often in the scriptures, God uses the most unlikely people and things to bring about his work. Why? Because one of his requirements for miracles is humility. This is the same lesson we learned about a couple of weeks ago when we read about how the army of the children of Israel were whittled down to 300 men by seeing how some of them drank out the river. The lesson wasn't; how to drink out of a stream. The lesson was that he needed them to know that it was not by their own strength that they defeated their enemies. It was only by the hand of God.

That reminds me of the story of a man who fell off a cliff and as he was plummeting towards his death he was praying the whole way down “God, please save me, I'm sorry for all the bad things I've done, I promise that I'll change and be a better man, if you will just save me from this death, God save me!” he cried. When all of a sudden his coat gets snagged by a branch that was protruding out from the cliff. When the man realizes he was safe he turns to God and says “Nevermind God, I got it”

This silly story shows us what each of us do in our lives. Though it may not be that dramatic, I'm sure you have done as I have and prayed for some miracle, some divine intervention in our life and when it comes how soon we forget what we were just pleading for. We forget so quickly that God just stepped in, God just saved you and we just move on with our lives with no thought of Gratitude. Remember when Jesus heals the lepers and only one of them comes back to thank Him for giving him his life back, and Jesus asks were there not 10 of you that were healed? Where are the other 9?

That's the first lesson that we can learn from these stories. Be humble so you can be one that God is willing to show miracles to and be grateful when they happen, so you don't call down the wrath of God on yourself by not recognizing the source of the blessing. This is why God uses ravens and widow women in Zarephath. And it is the reason that he will use you if you are like unto them.

The second lesson to learn from these accounts is **when** we see God step in and provide the miracle. Did you notice when it was that Elijah was commanded to leave the brook? When it was dried up. Did you notice when he came to the widow to bless her? It was when she had one small handful of meals left and only a few drops of oil. She was at the very end. Knowing she had no other place to turn from here. This was it. She went out to gather sticks for her last meal for her and her son. For us this may be hard to comprehend. We don't have to worry about our next meal. Even those who don't have anything in this world still have access to food, water and shelter. Our world is completely different from that of those who were living day to day just to survive. This is a great blessing and also a great curse. How can we get in that

mode or mindset of reliance on God when we have become so good at relying on ourselves? And knowing that He will provide even when all has been spent. Elijah was a master at this. He was so good at following the spirit with complete faith. I love the story in chapter 18 when he challenges Ahab and his Gods of Baal. Mocking them and egging them on to show the power of their puny God, Baal. And when nothing happens because he doesn't exist Elijah calls the people close to him, and I imagine his whispering "Watch this"

"Elijah took **twelve** stones,

And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar,

And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four **barrels** with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time.

And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I* have done all these things at thy word.

Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know **that** thou *art* the Lord God, and *that* thou hast turned their **heart** back again.

Then the **fire** of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he *is* the God; the Lord, he *is* the God."

I'm sure Elijah felt humbled and grateful to God that he was able to be a part of the incredible experience. What faith and trust he must have had in God to pull that off. What do you think he was feeling and thinking about as he approached that event? Did he know what would happen? Based on what I have experienced, I don't believe that God told him beforehand what his plan was. I believe that Elijah became so good at listening to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit that he knew every step he was to take just before he took it, and he obeyed with exactness. Your life could be the same. Perhaps God doesn't have plans for you to humiliate an idol worshipping evil King. But I'm positive he will give you opportunities to share the gospel in loving, humble ways to those he has prepared to hear His word. The question is: will we listen? Will we obey? Will we move forward with faith and humility? And when it is over will we recognize all that God has done to save and preserve you, to uplift and teach you?

What a great road map that God has given us in the story of Elijah. I pray that your studies this week will lead you to more faith and humility, more trust in God and in his plan.

For I am a witness that God truly does love his children so much that he will be a part of their lives as much as we will let him.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.