



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

1 Kings 17:1-24

Lesson 1 of 6

2020

"Great is Thy Faithfulness"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Mark, and good morning. If you were here last week you know that we finished the book of I Thessalonians. And so we are going to go to the Old Testament for about six weeks and do a study on the prophet Elijah. We will begin with the chapter where he is introduced to us, I Kings, chapter 17. I am going to read the first sixteen verses and then we'll have a word of prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

<sup>2</sup> The word of the LORD came to him, saying, <sup>3</sup> "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>4</sup> It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there." <sup>5</sup> So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. <sup>6</sup> The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook. <sup>7</sup> It happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

<sup>8</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him saying, <sup>9</sup> "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." <sup>10</sup> So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink." <sup>11</sup> As she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand."

<sup>12</sup> But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." <sup>13</sup> Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, *do* as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring *it* out to me, and afterward you may make *one* for yourself and for your son. <sup>14</sup> For thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.' " <sup>15</sup> So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for *many* days. <sup>16</sup> The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.

1 Kings 17:1-16

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of studying it together. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Lord, once again we thank You for this hour on this Sunday morning, this opportunity for us to be together as Your people to do what we are doing; singing hymns of praise to You and worshipping You in that way; and then opening the scriptures, as we've done, and reading them; and consider the introduction we are given to this great man of God, this great prophet of old, Elijah and beginning this series on him and his life. A life, which in and of itself is not significant for it's not the prophet who's great, rather, it is the God behind the prophet Who is great. And yet, as we look at Elijah's life and see this bold man ministering for You, we see Your hand in all of this and we are reminded of the great God Whom we serve. And what applied to Elijah applies to us. We see in this passage, as we will see in other passages, Your sovereignty and Your faithfulness—Your faithfulness to Your people.

And I pray, Lord, that we will get a glimpse of You in this: That we will get a glimpse of Your character, and be reassured and given confidence that we can walk by faith and trust in You in the day-to-day affairs of life; and to live for You knowing that You are in control of things, and that You are guiding us, and that You are going to take

care of us. So Lord, build our confidence through this, and give us a greater sense of Your greatness and Your glory.

What a privilege it is to be able to be here and to study a passage like this, and to consider these things. What a privilege it is to be in Your family which we have been brought into by Your grace, and grace alone. We thank You for that and pray that You would guide us now; that the Spirit of God would teach us and build us up in the faith. So we commit our time to You and ask You, Lord, teach us.

We thank you, Father, that we can come before Your throne of grace at any time, as we're taught in the book of Hebrews, and we can seek help in time of need. We pray for those who are in need. We have some who are being treated for physical difficulties; cancer, nagging illnesses and issues which don't seem to go away. But You can heal. And Father, we pray that You do that. And we pray through these difficulties that You will give a sense of Your presence and reveal Your faithfulness and comfort.

You are faithful, Father, and we thank You for that. We are reminded of that from our text and pray that You bless us this morning with a clear understanding of Yourself and a greater appreciation of You. We pray that You would teach us things that will prepare us for the rest of the day and the rest of the week. We commit these things to You, again thanking You for the privilege of being able to open the Scriptures, study them, learn, and grow. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

In II Corinthians 5, verse 7, the apostle Paul gives a brief summary of the Christian life. He wrote, ". . . we walk by faith, not by sight." We trust God's Word and follow it. —That's the Christian life. It is a challenging life, because sometimes circumstances seem to be obstacles that are too great to overcome, and we wonder, "Is faith reasonable? Can God provide?" Israel faced that challenge within days after they left Egypt, getting beyond the Red Sea with Pharaoh's chariots at their backs, finding water in the desert, being fed in the wilderness. They doubted God's ability and His care for them. But the Lord always proved able and faithful. And we have many such examples in the Word of God to support our confidence in Him.

Some of the greatest examples in the Bible of God's power and provision are recounted in the life and times of Elijah the Tishbite, God's prophet, who believed the Lord and found Him faithful. When Elijah first appears in the Bible, it could be said, in the words of Dickens, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Solomon's kingdom had divided between north and south. There was hostility between the two and in the northern kingdom, especially, there was chaos. One king after another was overthrown.

Then Omri seized the throne. He established stability in the north, peace with Judah in the south, and made trade agreements with the Phoenicians to the west. It began an age of peace and prosperity. It was at this time that they built great houses and the ivory palaces mentioned in Amos chapter 3, verse 15. It was— "the best of times." But it came at a cost. Omri made 'a deal with the devil' when he arranged a political marriage between his son, Ahab, and the Phoenician daughter of the king of Sidon, Jezebel. Jezebel was a worshiper of Baal, and she was a true believer. She propagated paganism throughout the Kingdom of Israel and persecuted God's prophets. It was— "the worst of times."

But as someone said, "It is always darkest just before the day dawneth.", and I Kings 17 begins with the first ray of light: "Now, Elijah the Tishbite, who was one of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years except by my word." Elijah, who would become the great prophet to the Jewish people, the standard for prophets, appears on the scene suddenly without warning or introduction. And very little is known about him. He was from Gilead, which was the region on the east side of the Jordan river, where the tribes of Ruben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh were located. We know how he dressed from II Kings chapter 1, verse 8. Other than that, we know very little about him. We know from the account in I Kings and from James, (chapter 5, verse 17), that he was a man of prayer and a man like us with human weaknesses. "...a man with a nature like ours...", as James said.

In other words, Elijah was a great man; and as we will see a bold man, a man of faith, but no superhero of fiction. And that's important. Elijah is a man whom we can identify with and whom we can learn from. And what we learn from him is the necessity of living by faith, not by sight; looking to the Lord in prayer and acting in obedience. It is not Elijah who is great, but 'the God of Elijah is great', (and Elijah declared that wherever he went, and his name was said). Because Elijah's name means 'my God is Yahweh', which is to say, 'Yahweh is God'. And that is the lesson of this book: The Lord is God and He is real. He is relevant. He is personal. He cares about His people. And we are to believe that. We are to trust in Him in these days in which we live, which spiritually, (in many ways), are very dark days. We are to trust Him and know that He will provide for us in every situation. Elijah's life is proof of that, and his name is the message of that.

When Baal worship was in its ascendancy, (at its peak, filling the nation of Israel with its priests and altars), this man suddenly appeared and told King Ahab, "The LORD is God, not Baal." And his prophecy, that there would be 'neither dew nor rain', was a direct challenge to Baal and proof that he was not real, but just a false idea.

Baal was the storm god. He was the god of rain. And in an agrarian and pastoral nation like Israel, a land of farms and flocks, rain was essential, (as rain is everywhere). And, so, in the midst of great prosperity and peace, the Lord declared, through His prophet, 'Rain will cease, and prosperity will stop'. If the 'storm-god' could not create rain, he wasn't real. And the land would be dry until the prophet spoke and reversed it. That was Elijah's message to the king. And what a bold message it was. Think of the contrast that we have here. This rustic from the country, wearing a hairy garment and leather belt, standing before the king of Israel, declaring, "I'm going to shut up the heavens."

And then he was gone. As suddenly as he appeared, he disappeared. The Word of the Lord came to him saying, "Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan." (vs3). He was sent away for his protection, (to remove him from Ahab's reach), but also for his instruction. He was a man of God, a man of faith. 'He stood before he Lord', he said. He spoke for the Lord.

But no man or woman of God is so mature that he or she doesn't need to learn more about the Lord.

The Lord God is infinite, eternal, unchangeable. And we need to learn who He is. We can never come to the end this learning. I think I've said this many times: 'Heaven and the world to come, the new heavens and the new Earth, (which are eternal), will be a time of learning and learning and learning; and we will never come to the end of the knowledge of God for all eternity. Never.'

So, we are never in a place where we don't need to learn more about the Lord. And Elijah would be given important lessons, by the stream Cherith, and there he would be strengthened in his faith and prepared further for the mission that God had given to him. God would protect the prophet and provide for him every day in a miraculous way. He would drink from the brook. And every morning and evening, ravens would bring him bread and meat. Stand before the Lord, represent Him, speak His Word—at home, at the office, at school, wherever He has placed you, and He will take care of you. He is no man's debtor. He does not abandon His servants. He provides and has unlimited means and ways of doing it.

Now that's the Lord God. That's our God. That's the God of Elijah. But it's a God that the world can't imagine. It can imagine a god that rules generally; a god that is kind of 'out there'. We have a sense of what he is, or who he is—he is concerned about the big things but not the small things, not the details of life. He's not personally involved with us. That is the god of the world.

But it's not the God of the Bible. The Lord God is sovereign over all things. It is all His creation. He controls all of the elements and nature, and He even makes the ravens His servants, to provide for His prophet, in spite of the circumstances. Elijah trusted in the Word of the Lord, he believed the Lord and obeyed. And the Lord provided for him in an amazing, miraculous way. He is good for His Word. One of the older writers, F. W. Krummacher said, "Faith is the grave of care." I like that statement. "Faith is the grave of care." It is. If God promised it, He will do it. Don't worry. Don't be anxious. Rest in that. Elijah did.

Now Elijah is a man like all of us, James said, '...with a nature like us'. And as we will see, he will have his struggles as well. But he trusted in the Lord. He rested in His command and His instruction; and the Lord provided for him. This period of time was, I think, a respite for Elijah, a time of rest and reflection, of thinking on the Lord and his ways of fellowship with Him. And it continued until the drought dried up the brook. Then Elijah faced a new test. Did he become concerned as he watched this stream shrink and wonder, "Well, what now? Do I need to take things in hand and make provision for myself? Should I move on?"

Well, if those thoughts went through his mind, it's not said here in the scripture. Nevertheless, Elijah would learn more about the Lord, and His ways, through this situation and the challenge that he was now facing. And one thing that he would learn was that he was not to depend upon present blessings; for they may end. And this applies to us as well. God is always faithful to provide; His provisions are good. They are always right. But, we can become dependent on them and think more of the provision than we do of the Provider. So sometimes God removes those provisions—and He removes it for our good.

Think of October 29, 1929, Black Tuesday, or since none of us were there at that time, think of something more recent, like 2008, and what happened to your IRA, or your 401k. And how suddenly, in a moment, it was reduced to half or less. You have a steady stream in your life. You have come to expect it and depend upon it. If it dries up suddenly, if your resources are exhausted, is that reason to panic, to jump out a window? No. Think on God's greatness. Think on Him. Trust in Him. Believe His promise. Pray to Him. Wait on Him and be where you should be doing what you should be doing. Don't panic. Trust the Lord. He is faithful. Elijah was being taught that lesson; not to rely on the gift, but on the Giver. The provisions of life may fail us, but the Lord never does. Trust in Him.

Another lesson for the prophet was the importance of waiting on the Lord. God had told him to go to the brook, but He hadn't told him to leave. So he waited. As he

watched this brook disappear, he waited. That's a hard thing to do, to wait. That's a great act of faith, really.

Eric Alexander has preached here more than once. It has been some time since Eric was here, but he told me then about a ministry that he had had in a small church in Scotland and how he had dedicated himself to seeing it develop. He made that commitment to its members, so I guess they had a kind of covenant. And he saw development. So did others. He got a call one day from a very prominent minister in a large church in London who wanted him to leave Scotland and come to London and be their preacher. It was a great opportunity. He took it very seriously. He prayed about it. But he knew that the work he had committed himself to, in the Lord, was not yet finished. He stayed in Scotland, and God blessed.

God's guidance is sometimes mysterious. It is given through His Word, (and that is not mysterious; it is very plain, it is set out for us in most instances), but it is also through providence and conviction. And it takes faith to see things and to wait upon the Lord to get the answer that we are waiting for, and to know exactly how we should go forward. This takes faith.

And Elijah did that. He stayed as the brook continued to dry up. Then the Lord spoke again to the prophet, at the right time, and instructed him to leave his place of comfort and move on. He said, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." (vs9). So, He commanded ravens to provide, and now, He has commanded a widow to provide.

Now this was a command and an instruction that really would not encourage confidence. Zarephath was in the pagan land of Sidon, the land of the Phoenicians; Jezebel's land; Baal country...And a widow was going to be his means of support?! Widows were the weakest and most vulnerable people in ancient society. They needed people to provide for them. But she would be Elijah's support. It was another challenge to his faith and his obedience to go to a widow. But he had been fed for months by ravens, and if God could use unclean birds, He could use a pagan widow.

So, he went. He came out of hiding and traveled north to the land of the Phoenicians, until he came to the gates of Zarephath. There he saw the widow gathering sticks for a fire for her meal. Elijah called out to her. When he did, he discovered that the drought had reduced her to her last bit of food. She was on the verge of starvation and death when he asked her for a drink and a meal: "Please, bring me a piece of bread in your hand. But she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl, and a little oil in the jar, and behold I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son that we may eat it and die." (vs12). Well, Elijah told her 'not to worry, the Lord would provide'. He said in verse 14, "For thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.' " Or, 'You'll be provided for. As long as this famine goes on, the Lord is going to take care of you.'

Now Baal could not do that. But the Lord could, and He did. She believed Elijah, and it happened according to the word of the Lord. She, her son, and the prophet ate for many days. Verse 16, "The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke through Elijah." So, in Phoenicia, in the very heartland of Baal worship, the Lord had power over things Baal didn't. The Lord provided where Baal failed, because Baal doesn't exist, and the Lord does.

But the priests of Baal had an explanation for why the 'storm god' didn't produce a storm or rain during certain seasons in the year. In the Baal myths, each year Baal submitted to the god Mot, the god of death, and he went into the netherworld. That was the reason for dry seasons. But every year, the goddess Anath defeated Mot and freed Baal to restore the land to fertility. And this explains the seasons of the year. This cycle happened every year and it would explain the drought. Why the drought then? Well, Baal was 'dead' in the netherworld.

But what the Lord demonstrated to the widow, and to His own people, is that the Lord doesn't die. He cannot die. The Lord is immortal, self-existent, the only God, and the supplier of all life. He showed Himself to the widow as the living God... And giver

of life when next she experienced the greatest tragedy of her life, and Elijah did the greatest miracle of the chapter.

Verse 17. "Now it came about after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe that there was no breath left in him." Just when it seemed that they had come through this great trial, this famine, when it seemed as though they were going to make it through this terrible time and survive it all, her son suddenly died. The widow was devastated. "So she said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!" (vs 18). This sudden reversal of fortune left her completely disillusioned with the prophet and with the Lord. It now seemed that the whole thing was a conspiracy against her for a sin she had committed. Maybe it's an unknown or undeclared sin; something that she had kept within and she had been haunted about for years. And she felt that now justice had finally caught up with her and taken her only son.

Or maybe she just had this general sense of guilt. She knew that she was wrong with the Lord, and something was not right with her life and that she was guilty. And she thought that this was her punishment. (This would fit a notion that was very common then, I think, that God is a hard and merciless God.) And that is how we often think. We may not actually think it in those words, but we have this sense that God is going "to get us." When tragedy occurs, we think, 'it's due to some sin or guilt'.

I think this is a common thought, because we see that very clearly in John, chapter 9. You remember when the disciples are walking with the Lord in Jerusalem and they see this man. He must have been a famous beggar to them because they knew his condition, that he was blind from birth. So, they asked the question, 'Is his condition due to his sin or his parents' sin? They didn't ask, "Is it due to sin?" They just assumed that his blindness was due to sin—but whose sin? His? Well, how could it be his sin since he has blind from birth? Then, was it his parents' sin? This was the problem they had. Can you solve this problem? And Jesus answered, 'Neither. Neither one: But it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.' And then, you know the story, how

He healed the blind man. It was an amazing miracle, and that man became a great witness for the Lord to the leaders of Jerusalem. It was for the glory of God.

And that would be the outcome of our incident. But the widow didn't know that yet and neither did the prophet. Elijah could not see into the future, (and God had not revealed that to him yet.) And so Elijah is put to the test again. And he is greatly disturbed by this tragedy just as much, it seems, as the widow was. Still, he knew the Lord. He knew God's power, that nothing is too difficult for the Lord. As the Lord told Abraham in Genesis 18, 'You are going to have a son, Abraham.' To which Abraham asks, 'How can someone my age have a son?' And, the Lord says, "Is anything too *difficult* for the LORD?" (vs14). This is an interesting statement, because the Hebrew word for "*difficult*" also means "wonderful." So this Hebrew phrase can also be translated, "Is anything too *wonderful* for the LORD?" or "You mean I can't do the most *wonderful* things for you?" This is how great God is.

Well, Elijah knew the Lord. He knew He is merciful, so he did what he should do, and what we should do, he went to the Lord. He took the dead child from his mother's arms and carried him to his own room upstairs. He laid him on his own bed, and he called out to the Lord. "O LORD my God, have you also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying by causing her son to die?" (vs20). I think that suggests that the prophet is puzzled, and he doesn't quite understand this situation. Even to Elijah, from all appearances, the Lord repaid evil for good, her hospitality with death. That didn't make sense to Elijah, (and wouldn't make sense to us either). Over the past three years, no doubt, he had come to really love this family, love this child and care about the widow; and was grieved for the grief that she was going through and grieved because the child was gone.

This is a reminder, again, that no matter how mature a person may be in the faith, or how much he or she has grown in the knowledge of the Lord God, there are still gaps in our thinking. None of us has it perfectly together. There are gaps in our thinking, and oftentimes there is a disconnect between the mind and the emotions. We don't

know everything. We don't understand everything. And even when we do understand, sometimes we regress and become troubled.

This is when we need to be reminded of the Truth that we have come to believe; and remember, we are always in need of instruction. The reason for the events and the providence of God that trouble us are events like this very event here. They remind us of the mystery of the relationship we have with the Lord God, events like the death of a child. This one has a wonderful resolution, but oftentimes it does not that. We go through these experiences and we don't have the resolution. And we wonder, "Why? Why has this happened?"

Well, they are "The secret things..." of Deuteronomy 29, verse 29 that Moses said "...belong to the LORD our God...". So, we are not going to be able to penetrate many of those "secret things".

But even though Elijah was in the dark about this event, and deeply troubled, he knew the Lord, and had faith in Him. And he knew that the Lord hears His people when they cry out to Him. And so in his confusion, in his grief, Elijah did just that: He cried out. We read now in verses 21 through the end of the chapter, "Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him." The LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him, and he revived. Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth." "

Before James referenced Elijah's prayers, he wrote in James, chapter 5, verse 16b, "...The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." This miracle was not due to the prophet's power but the Lord's power in answer to the prophet's prayer. Again, it had a message to the widow and to the people of that age, that God is not like Baal: The Lord God does not die; He is immortal; He is the source of life; He gives life to the dead.

Baal could do nothing like that because Baal was a myth—a most cruel myth that kept people enslaved to fear. It kept them enslaved to the fear of death. This miracle proved the Lord true and merciful. And the widow believed.

Now why did God choose this widow to bless, and not another? Well, we don't know, other than it was His sovereign grace. But He did and through His blessings, He led her to faith. And all of this event, like the blind man in John, chapter 9, was all to His Glory—He turned tragedy into blessing. We cannot see 'the good' hidden in a hardship. We just see the dark cloud. But it is as William Cowper wrote in his hymn, "Behind the frowning providence He hides His smiling face."

Our Lord has a good intention in everything that touches our lives. That is the way of the life of faith and in trusting His Word in spite of any circumstances. This is how we are to live. We trust Him, even though the circumstances seem to deny what He is saying. And if we don't understand now we must go to a text like this to know that God is behind the difficulties of life; that He is a good and merciful God; and that someday He will make those "secret things" known to us. Then we will understand and be comforted.

Now as we look at this chapter and the way the Lord dealt with His prophet and this woman, we might wonder, 'If we could just raise the dead today, just imagine the results of that. Just imagine, how many people would believe, just like the widow of Zarephath! And wouldn't it be nice, if we had the advantages of Elijah; of God speaking audibly to us and telling us what to do each day, "Go here today, go there tomorrow." 'All of this is false thinking, but this is not an uncommon way for people to think today.

I recently read a Japanese historical novel, by a Japanese author, titled *Silence*. (In fact, they made a movie of it a few years back that is pretty faithful to the book.) It is about a Jesuit missionary who went to Japan in the 1600s, and about the persecution that he witnessed and experienced. After watching some peasants slowly drowned in the sea for practicing their Catholic faith, and hearing one singing a hymn as he died, the priest wondered about the silence of God. He thought to himself, while they raised their

voices in anguish, "God remains with folded arms, silent." He heard lots of sounds through the novel: ravens screeching, turtle doves singing, cicadas buzzing, his guards laughing, and prisoners praying. But from God? —Only silence. "Lord, why are you silent?" he asked. "Why are you always silent?"

Have you ever felt that God is silent? Maybe during a difficult time you prayed but have not felt anything and thought, "I want to hear a voice. I wish God would speak, but all I get is silence." This analysis is false; God has spoken. He is not silent. He has spoken His Word in the Scriptures. And in them He has given to us His mind and His answers. The Bible is revelation, sufficient for every situation we find ourselves in, in this life.

The problem is not God's silence, but our deafness. We are not listening. And now is the time for us to listen to what He has said: To read His Word, to understand the Scriptures; and to believe them: And then apply the skill that we can gain to believe that the Spirit of God can create within us the ability to apply the Scriptures properly. That is walking by faith.

But people find this hard to do. So did Israel. Psalms 78, verse 19 recounts their doubts as they came out of Egypt and entered the Sinai desert, "Then they spoke against God; They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" I have been there; I have been to that desert. I understand their worry. It's like a moonscape with maybe a few shrubs. How can God feed a multitude there? But He did. Every day. And their shoes never wore out. And Elijah had this great event recorded in his Bible, just as we do, and it was recorded there to encourage his faith, just as it is to encourage ours. And God did the same miracle for him; He gave manna from heaven to Israel and He gave bread and meat from the sky, from the ravens, to Elijah.

When Jesus finished teaching over 5000 men, not counting women and children, on the far shore of Galilee, He told them to sit down. The place was a wilderness. In fact, in Mark it is described as a *desert*. (That's the word that he uses, "*eremos*." It's a word for a 'desert', and usually translated "a deserted place". But the word "desert" is used here to make us reflect upon the desert in Sinai and the way the Lord provided for the

people there.) So what is being indicated here is that the Lord is there on the shore of Galilee, and He fed the multitude in that desert. He broke a few loaves and fishes, and he fed all of them—with baskets of food left over. Just like the widow would pour out the little bit of oil she had and then find there was still some there left for the next day. The bread that fed Israel in the wilderness, that fed Elijah by the brook, that fed the widow and her son in the famine, is a picture of Christ— The true bread that came down out of heaven. He is God's greatest provision for mankind, Who gives forgiveness and everlasting life to all who believe in Him.

And now, since the Father sacrificed His son for us, He won't withhold anything from us. That's the assurance we have from Romans 8, verse 32, that since the Father gave up His own son for us, He "...will freely give us all things." Since He gave the greatest for us, He will surely not withhold the least from us. Elijah experienced that as he walked by faith, not by sight. And we will experience that as we walk by faith. But we'll never walk by faith, as the prophet walked, if our God is small. And we will never know God as great and faithful unless we listen to Him, unless we hear Him in His Word, in the Scriptures. We need to read them; we need to know them; we need to study them. That is how we listen to God. "So faith comes from hearing...", Paul said, "...and hearing from the word of Christ." (Rom 10:17). He is not silent. He has spoken. Listen to Him. May God give all of us ears to hear, and the desire to hear Him.

Maybe you have never heard His voice. Maybe you have never believed in Christ as Savior. He has spoken about that and here is what He said in Matthew 11, verse 28, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Rest from your sin. Rest from the weight of guilt that is upon you. If you feel that, if you sense that, look to Christ. Trust in Him. He has removed that weight at the cross for all who believe. Turn to Him. Be saved. May God help you to do that, and help all of us to live for Him, to walk by faith, to live for the Lord Jesus Christ, and to His glory. Let's pray.

Father we thank you for Your goodness to us, and we thank you for the example of the prophet, and how he faced challenging days, and was asked to do things that

perhaps seemed contrary to reason at the time. But he followed You, and You blessed him, and You always will. May we be faithful to You. You are always faithful to us. We give You thanks for Your Son, the bread of life. We thank You for the salvation He has given us. May we live for Him, and to Your glory. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

*(End of Audio)*