

**Sermon Series: "Becoming God's Humble Hero: Elijah"—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—
8/19/2007**

Title: "A Man of God . . . A Promise of God"

Text: 1 Kings 18: 41-46

Intro.: *Ills.: Ten Reasons to Pray*

Theme: Prayer is a spiritual activity that can be practiced with complete confidence because of the promises of God which back it up and give us the confidence to know that we are heard and will be answered.

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. James 5:17-18

Prayer's promise

- The underlying story in Elijah's story is that God keeps his word
 1. **God's general promises** – kept it to the people of Israel when they fell away in sin but then returned in repentance
 - a. *So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today--to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul--then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. Deut. 11:13-14*
 2. **God's specific promises** – kept it to Elijah who was so convinced of God's assured promise (18:1)
 - a. *The word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land." 18:1*
 - b. A protracted drought and no sign of rain in a sun bleached sky to convince Elijah other than God's promise
 - c. *"They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. Heb 11:13*
- God's promise, not our fervency, guarantees our prayers
 1. Much of modern Christian teaching on prayer falsely attributes answers to one praying not to God answering
 2. *The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16*
 3. *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. 2 Cor. 1:20*
 4. **Ills.: Prayer for God's help**

Prayer's posture

- It is a devoted space in our lives (*But Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel*
 1. *"Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." Mark 6: 31*
 2. Prayer becomes part of a relationship rather a ritual of our lives
 3. We expect to meet God and see God's presence and power in our lives
 4. Carving out sacred space/time in our daily lives for God
- It is a time for no arrogance or pretense (*he bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.*)
 1. When we are alone and before God, we can't be full of ourselves
 2. *"Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. Matthew 23:12*
- It is a time to display the boldness of faith in God's greatness (*vs. 44-45*)
 1. **Ills.: Praying with eyes open**
 2. *We have a superior chief priest who has gone through the heavens. That person is Jesus, the Son of God. We have a chief priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way that we are, but he didn't sin. So we can go confidently to the throne of God's kindness to receive mercy and find kindness, which will help us at the right time. Heb 4:14-16*
 3. Elijah's persistence in looking for an answer (*vss. 43-44 --7 X's and would have continued looking until God did*)

4. Ills.: Prayer of widow and judge — print Luke 18: 1-8

Prayer's power (Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah vs. 46)

- A hand of power
 1. *That all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, so that you may fear the LORD your God forever." Joshua 4:24*
- A merciful hand
 1. *Let us now fall into the hand of the LORD for His mercies are great, but do not let me fall into the hand of man." 2 Sam 24: 14*
- A secure place
 1. *My times are in your hands. Psalm 31: 15*
- An action place
 1. *And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. Acts 11:21*

Ten Reasons to Pray

The top 10 reasons you are too busy to pray today:

1. You wake up feeling rested, then realize your alarm should've gone off an hour ago.
2. Your spouse is away on a two-day business trip that's lasted all week.
3. None of the clean clothes you were able to find match.
4. Your teenager shaved...the left half of his head.
5. Your bills are due, and your toddler hid the checkbook.
6. A strange fluid is dripping from your car.
7. You accidentally delete your quarterly report ten minutes before a meeting with your boss.
8. You're in charge of games for the church youth night tonight.
9. Your dog is throwing up.
10. Your toilet's overflowing, but at least you found the checkbook.

Ten reasons you really should pray today:

(See list above.)

"The Top Ten Reasons You Are Too Busy to Pray Today," Marriage Partnership (1996)

Prayer for God's Help

Dear God, So far today, I've done all right. I haven't gossiped. I haven't lost my temper. I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or over indulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, God, I'm going to get out of bed; and from then on, I'm going to need a lot more help. Amen

Author unknown; submitted by Bill White, Paramount, California

Praying with eyes open

My 3-year-old daughter Hannah came home from Bible school and announced that her new teacher was unusual. "He makes everyone bow their heads and close their eyes when we pray, but then keeps his eyes open." I asked Hannah how she would know that if her eyes were closed. "I only close one eye at a time," she replied.

Malinda F., Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, "Life in Our House," Christian Parenting Today (May/June 2000)

1 Kings 18:41-46

⁴¹And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." ⁴²So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

⁴³"Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked.

"There is nothing there," he said.

Seven times Elijah said, "Go back."

⁴⁴The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea."

So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.' "

⁴⁵Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

⁴⁶The hand of the LORD came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel. [NIV]

Luke 18:1-8

¹Jesus used this illustration with his disciples to show them that they need to pray all the time and never give up.

²He said, "In a city there was a judge who didn't fear God or respect people. ³In that city there was also a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice.' ⁴"For a while the judge refused to do anything. But then

he thought, 'This widow really annoys me. Although I don't fear God or respect people, ⁵I'll have to give her justice. Otherwise, she'll keep coming to me until she wears me out.' "

⁶The Lord added, "Pay attention to what the dishonest judge thought. ⁷Won't God give his chosen people justice when they cry out to him for help day and night? Is he slow to help them? ⁸I can guarantee that he will give them justice quickly. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"