

Sermon Series: “Elijah: God’s humble hero”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—8/5/07

Title: “Standing in the Shadow of God”

Text: 1 Kings 17: 17-24

Intro.: *Ills.: Being Hit by the Shadow*

Theme: Sometimes, as God’s representatives to our world, we do not need to speak for God; rather, we need to let God’s sovereignty and grace speak for itself in his mighty and mysterious ways.

Sometime, after these things . . .” (Vs. 17)

§ Trusting and waiting on God’s direction may seem like a roller coaster ride

1. “God’s ways are as hard to discern as the pathways of the wind, and as mysterious as a tiny baby being formed in a mother’s womb.” *Ecc. 11:5 (NLT)*
2. For Elijah and the widow both times of trial and miraculous provision by God had marked the recent past
 - a. Drought to raven feeding by a creek (vs. 1-7)
 - b. Destitute situation and a bottomless container of flour and oil (vs. 8-16)
 - c. “Divide your gifts among many, for you do not know what risks might lie ahead.” *Ecc. 11: 2*

§ Train your faith to respond, not to react to the future

1. It is easy when life comes unglued around us to fly-to-pieces and lose our faith witness
 - a. The widow became bitter and unbiblical in her view of God (vs. 18)
 - b. Even Elijah assumed that God had “killed” (murdered) her son (vs. 20)
 - c. We could become unglued and in a momentary tirade lose our witness in front of young or new believers
2. In a broken world, sin-warped lives experience sin’s effect on creation
 - a. **Ills.: What if’s of the Minn. I-35 bridge collapse**
 - b. “Rejoice in every day of life. But remember that the dark days will be many.” *Ecc. 11: 8 (NLT)*
3. In a Savior-intervened history, God comes to redeem us and the bad moments in our life
 - a. Trusting that there is no debt of sin remaining and no penance required
 - b. “But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law.” *Gal 3: 13*
 - c. Looking for the glory of God to shine through in this darkest moment
 - d. “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. *John 9:3*
 - e. **Ills.: Our finest hour**

Principles of faith for living while under the shadow of God’s plan

§ **BE CALM** – believing that life is not random but is directed by a good and gracious God that overshadows it

1. “Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.” *Ps. 91: 1*
2. Some could look at the widow and assume a vindictive God (how her neighbors viewed their god, Baal)
3. Elijah in exasperation could throw his hands up and say, “Enough is enough, Lord! You brought misery.” vs. 20
4. Or we could find peace in God’s promise and his plan
 - a. *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. Romans 8:28-30*
 - b. “You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!” *Is 26: 3*

§ **DON’T BE AFRAID TO ASK** – if/when we are in trouble, call out

1. “Call upon me in the day of trouble; I shall deliver you; and you shall glorify me.” *Ps. 50: 15*
2. Elijah is **specific**, **trusting**, and **expectant** of God’s action on the widow’s behalf (vs. 21-22)
3. Exercising your faith and your prayer life during times of dark, storm clouds in your life
4. “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: 16*

§ **ACT HUMBLY WHEN GOD ACTS** – give credit to whom credit is due

1. **Ills.: a man-making contest with God**
2. In pride Elijah could have been offended by the woman’s condescending response (“now I’m convinced that you are a man of God” vs. 24) or taken credit for the miraculous resurrection, but he didn’t (Look, your son is alive!)
3. Standing in God’s shadow means not only reaping its benefits but in thanks acknowledging it

Being Hit by the Shadow

Donald Barnhouse was the pastor of Philadelphia's Tenth Presbyterian Church when his wife died and left him with young daughters to raise alone. He did something that I could never do: he conducted his own wife's funeral. It was while driving to that funeral that he realized that he had to say something to explain all of this to his girls, to somehow put in perspective for them something with which he himself was already struggling. They stopped at a traffic light while driving to the funeral. It was a bright day, and the sun was streaming into the car and warming it. A truck pulled up next to them, and the shadow that came with the truck darkened the inside of the car. It was then that he turned to his daughters and asked, "Would you rather be hit by the shadow or by the truck?" One of them responded, "Oh, Daddy, that's a silly question! The shadow can't hurt you. I would rather be hit by the shadow than by a truck." It was then that he tried to explain to them that their mother had died and that it was as if she had been hit by a shadow. It was as if Jesus had stepped in the way in her place, and it was he who had been hit by the truck. He quoted the familiar words of (Psalms 23): "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." **Leith Anderson, "Valley of Death's Shadow," Preaching Today, Tape No. 131.**

A man-making contest with God

After discovering how to clone humans, two scientists challenged God:

"We don't need you anymore," they said. "We can make life by ourselves now."

"Okay," God replied, "let's have a man-making contest."

"All right," said the scientists. "We'll do it like you did in the beginning." Then they reached down to grab a handful of dirt to begin to form a man.

Then they heard God's voice from heaven: "Hold it—get your own dirt!"

Submitted by J. Richard Love, Ruston, Louisiana

Apollo 13 – 'our finest hour'

In April 1970, the spacecraft Apollo 13, was crippled by an in-flight explosion. The astronauts relied on archaic navigational techniques to get back home. A slight miscalculation could have sent the ship spiraling thousands of miles off course into outer space. Even if navigation back into earth's orbit succeeded, fears remained that the heat shield and parachutes were not functional. In addition, a tropical storm was brewing in the landing zone. In this scene, a press agent for NASA asks an official for more information. As the press agent recounts the multitude of dangers facing the crew, the NASA official, clearly stressed, responds, "I know what the problems are, Henry. It will be the worst disaster NASA's ever experienced." A NASA chief overhears this pessimistic assessment and responds sharply, "With all due respect, I believe this is going to be our finest hour. **Elapsed Time: Measured from the Universal logo, this scene begins at 02:03:40 and ends at 02:09:06. Apollo 13 (Universal Pictures, 1995), produced by Brian Grazer, directed by Ron Howard**

1 Kings 17:17-24

¹⁷Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. ¹⁸She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

¹⁹"Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. ²⁰Then he cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought tragedy also upon this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" ²¹Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

²²The LORD heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. ²³Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

²⁴Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth." [NIV]