

19th March, 2023

SEASON OF DESPAIR, FEAR AND HELPLESSNESS

(A SERMON DELIVERED AT BURUBURU CHURCH OF GOD)

(1KINGS 17:1-16, 19:1-11)

Who is Elijah

- J A prophet and a miracle worker who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel and became prominent during the reign of King Ahab
- J He is one of the greatest prophets and miracle workers in Hebrew scriptures. In **Matthew 17:3-13**, Him and Moses appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration
- J His name comes from Hebrew expression signifying “Jehovah is my God”
- J He was a prophet known for upholding the worship of God and doing miracles in God’s name.
- J He is venerated by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike.
- J We are told nothing more ,even about his parents except being a Tishbite from Gilead.We don’t know his age when his life story begins (**God chose his prophets as and when it was convenient to him**)
- J Elijah did not spare wicked rulers. Near the end of his ministry,he wrote a letter informing the southern kingdom of Judah’s wicked King Jehoram that he will die in a most painful manner. Otherwise Elijah focuses his ministry on the northern kingdom condemning the wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and their sons
- J He had Courage to speak to the powers that were.He did not compromise his faith in God.He is a typical Man of God like other prophets of God who never compromised .They were what we could nowadays call the official opposition to secular authorities (Some of them were young like John the Baptist, Samuel and Jeremiah, but did not compromise)

Elijah predicts a Drought and Encounter with the Widow of Zarephath (1Kings 17:1-16)

1. He declared there would be no rain in the land of Israel and immediately God told him to depart and hide himself by the brook of Cherith.Baal was also a god of rain, so prophesying no rain was to show how inadequate this god was.
2. God promised to provide for him at the brook. God commanded ravens to feed him. Ravens brought **him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening (2 meals) every day and he drank from the brook.** Ravens are; Highly intelligent birds. Feed mostly on decaying food of dead animals (carnivorous).In Jewish culture forbidden for food ,Cunning and deceptive birds.
3. **Without rain ,after a while the brook dried up.** Was it unknown to God when he directed him there that the brook would dry? **God is the source and if Elijah attached his faith on the brook then he would have misplaced faith..**
4. God now sent him to **Sidon** to a place known as **Zarephath**.Sidon was in the territory occupied by the Israel tribe of Asher but was independent of Israel rule(a Gentile region).**It was a home city of Jezebel.** Presently it is a thriving port city in Lebanon. **God begins a season and he can end it but he will immediately speak to you when it is over.**
5. He was led to the house of a widow (**no name given but her faith is enough to identify her**).
 - J He first asked for water. Then he told her to bring it with a morsel of bread
 - J She had only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. Just enough for her and her son then they die. The honest widow vowed in the name of the living God about what she had. **How often**

do we invoke the name of God in our dealings-sometimes truthfully and other times as a mere slogan.

-) The jar of flour was never spent nor the jug of oil, until the Lord sent the rain upon the earth.
-) She and her household ate all the days of the drought because **she did as Elijah said** and according to the word of God that He spoke by Elijah.

Elijah Flees Jezebel (1Kings 19:1-11)

6. The Lord sent rain after Elijah had contested with 450 prophets of Baal, defeated and killed them all. When Jezebel-the wife of Ahab heard that Elijah had killed all the prophets of Baal, she vowed to kill Elijah.
7. Verse 3 says **Elijah was afraid and he arose and ran for his life towards Beersheba in the territory of Judah.(Make reference to Bible maps to appreciate how far south the prophet ran)**
8. **After a day's journey he came and sat under a broom tree and asked the Lord saying" It is enough;now,O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers"(19:4) — exhausted, lonely, frightened, and feeling utterly defeated. In his desperation, he foolishly begs the Lord to take his life. Have you ever reached the same desperate situation? Elijah felt lonely except for God who was with him and knew better. Do you feel lonely too?**
9. Instead, the Lord renews Elijah — with a double portion of food, drink, rest. And then he **sends him out again with a powerful demonstration of his power**, with a quiet word to his heart, with a new commission, and with the assurance that many others also were on his side. God is here to renew you too.
10. God had better plans for him than his wish. He fed him for the journey of 40 days and forty nights to Mount Horeb-the mount of God.**(The mountain at which God gave the ten commandments to Moses, the mountain of the burning bush, the mountain where Moses was asked by God to strike the rock to obtain water, all these during the Exodus of the the nation of Israel from Egypt)**
11. While in the cave God asked Elijah **"What are you doing here Elijah?"(19:10-11). Elijah was in a transitional period-it can be self directed or God directed.** Elijah defended himself this way:
 -) I have been very zealous/jealous for the **LORD, the God of hosts**
 -) The people of Israel have forsaken your covenant
 -) They have thrown down your altars
 -) They have killed your prophets with the sword and **I, even I only, am left and they seek my life ,to take it away(Cf.19:18-God had already a remnant of 7000 other saints in Israel who had not worshipped Baal)**

You may be in a similar situation as Elijah-fearful, desperate ,lonely ,depressed and lost direction(faith).God knows where you are although he is asking you the same question. God wants to hear from you.

12. He was told **"Go out stand on the mount before the LORD". Likewise God is calling you to stand before him.**

Challenges and Lessons from Elijah's Ministry Years

-) Elijah ministry isn't just doom and gloom. During three and a half years without rain, the Lord instructed Elijah to hide. First, the Lord tells him to hide by a stream called Cherith east of the Jordan River, where ravens feed him. **There are battles to fight and others to retreat, only if you listen to God.**
-) Second, the Lord tells Elijah to hide in a town called Zarephath on the Mediterranean coast between Tyre and Sidon. There a poor widow will feed him from a miraculous supply of grain and oil. **In this season of hiding, the Lord graciously cares for Elijah at every turn. Is your home or heart open to strangers?**

-) At the end of these years without rain, Elijah calls a national contest on Mount Carmel between the Lord God, creator of heaven and earth, and the wicked pagan gods of Baal and Asherah. It's quite a dramatic story well worth reading or reading again.
-) After his great triumph atop Mount Carmel, however, Elijah fears Queen Jezebel's vow to take his life **"by about this time tomorrow"** (**1 Kings 19:2**).

Failures and Fears

-) Fearing **Jezebel**, Elijah flees into the desert and asks the Lord to take his life. He wrongly assumes that he is the Lord's only prophet within the kingdom of Israel **(Ahab and Jezebel-don't envy Ahab as a husband. Some families are like this one)**
-) Actually, "fears" is an understatement. Elijah flees into southern Judah's wilderness, collapses under a tree, and begs the Lord to take him before Jezebel's men find and slaughter him. In other words, Elijah is depressed out of his mind. **Sometimes God does not always give us details of where he sends us. He wants obedience. What the Lord says to you is more important than what you said to him. God never gives up on us even when you give up on him.**
-) **YET James 5:17 says "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit."**
-) In this season of hiding, the Lord sends an angel to revive him and give him his final instructions, including appointing his successor, Elisha.
-) **In fear Peter denied Jesus and called him "this man".(Matt 26:72-74.) but he was later restored by Jesus. God will also revive and restore anyone who acknowledges Him as savior and Lord. Restoration comes with revival and more blessings. Learn from the lives of Elijah and Peter after revival.**
-) **Whether in victory or despair, we can trust the Lord to know exactly what we need and to meet our every need in sometimes, miraculous ways.**

WHEN THE RELIABLE SOURCE DRIES UP AND STORMS OF FEAR GRIP YOU, WHAT WILL YOU DO NEXT?

13. **Stop the why question and instead focus on "Where is God in this?"** (*"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John.16:33)*)
14. **Identify the storms of fear and entrust them to Christ. Elijah named his and God attended him.**

Prepared by;

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