

Trust His Word

1 Kings 17:1-9

- Ever feel ordinary?
 - It is very rare for any of us to feel exceptional.
 - I know that whenever I succeed in one area, I feel like I don't measure up in another.
 - No matter how good I get at something, there is always someone better.
 - As hard as I would like to escape it, the truth is, I am just an ordinary guy.
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- Do you ever feel that way?
 - As hard as our world tries to make us all feel unique, we still find ourselves comparing ourselves to others and coming up short.
 - We say, "If only I was stronger/smarter/prettier/taller/more outgoing/better at thinking on my feet/a better mom or dad, I would be able to accomplish this level of success or that."
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- We carry that into our spiritual lives as well, don't we?
 - We read stories of great men and women of God in the Bible and throughout history, and we think, "I could never do that. They were some kind of super-human people who had some ability I don't have."
 - We look around at big churches around our nation and see all they are accomplishing for the kingdom of God and say, "Man, what can we do as a little church? We don't have these resources or that group of people or anything."
 - We're just ordinary.

- Over the next 8 weeks, we want to dispel the lie that God only uses extraordinary people.
 - In fact, if you look deeply at Scripture, the one common trait that we will see in the lives God used is that the overwhelming majority were extremely ordinary.
 - Yet each of them saw God move in extraordinary ways that far exceeded anything they could take credit for.
 - That's why we are entitling our study, "God's power in ordinary people", because any of the great stories of the Bible revolve around regular, ordinary, people like us.
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- To dispel that lie, we are going to take a look at one of the most extraordinary prophets in the Bible: a man named Elijah.
 - He is one of the most well-known prophets, having been used of God to do amazing things like raise the dead and call down fire from heaven.
 - He is used symbolically throughout the Old Testament to point towards the prophet who would come before Christ, and he was one of the two people who came down from heaven and had the privilege of encouraging Christ shortly before His death on the Cross.
 - Yet the book of James gives us an incredible insight into Elijah's life and character:

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.
(James 5:17-18, NASB95)
 - Did you catch it? Elijah, the victorious praying, fire-from-heaven-calling, chariot-of-fire riding prophet, is a man with a nature like ours.

- Elijah was a man. He wasn't a superhero or a demigod, he was a man with a nature like ours.
- As we will see, he was a man who celebrated great victories, got sarcastic with people, and also sunk into deep depression.
- God chose to display His power mightily through Elijah, even though there was nothing overly extraordinary about him.
- We don't know who his family was, we don't know exactly where the town he came from was located. We don't know what education he had or what his job was before God called him.
- All we know is that God took this unknown man from a small town and used him to shape history.
- Isn't it great that one of the greatest prophets in history came from the back side of nowhere from an unknown family?!
- Not only that, but as we look at Elijah's life, we will be introduced to other ordinary people in whose lives God worked, which keeps reinforcing that God demonstrates His power through ordinary people!
- Here's my hope: as we look at the life of Elijah, you will see that God can work through you, just like He worked through Elijah.
- That doesn't mean you are necessarily going to lead a nation in repentance or not see death and go out on a chariot of fire; however, the same power that God demonstrated in Elijah's life, He can demonstrate through you.
- By the way, let's establish this truth up front: God didn't demonstrate His power in and through Elijah for Elijah's benefit.

- He always worked to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways to His people and those who were far from Him.
 - Our society has the idea that if God demonstrates His power in us, then we will have everything we want, get every promotion, ace every test, have our 2.5 kids and our three car garage and die a nice, peaceful, pain-free death in our sleep at a ripe old age.
 - That's not what we mean at all.
 - What we mean when we say God's power is working in ordinary people, we mean that God can demonstrate that He is still an incredible God, allowing you to honor Him and give testimony to Him to His people and to those around you who are far from God.
 - You can be used of God to faithfully obey Him in the way that brings Him the greatest glory, just like Elijah did.
 - Your ordinariness doesn't limit God's ability to use you; in fact, it might be just what He uses to show Himself strong.
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- With all that out of the way as introduction, let's take a look at the first encounter we have with Elijah.
 - For us to understand the accounts we are going to look at, you have to know what was going on in Israel.
 - God set Israel apart to be His own, special people. He formed their nation, their laws, and gave them their land.
 - The people entered into a covenant with God, declaring that they would honor and serve Him, since He is the only true God.
 - Time and time again, they turned from following God and turned to worship idols.
 - The nation of Israel was led by a guy named King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel.

- Together, they led the entire nation into worshiping two different false Gods: Baal, the storm god, and Asherah, the mother god.
- This has been going on for some time, so God is about to judge His people for their idolatry, with the goal to wake them up and turn them back to Him.
- That's where we pick up the action, and that's where Elijah comes in.
- Look at **1 Kings 17:1-9**.
- Elijah shows up and confronts Ahab, telling him that God is about to use Elijah's prayer to send a drought on the nation.
- Immediately after that, you have this important phrase: *"the word of the Lord came to him, saying..."*
- God's command here seems strange: Go tell Ahab that it isn't going to rain, and then go hide by a stream until I tell you otherwise.
- However, as we see through the rest of the section this morning, and as we will see throughout our time of looking at Elijah, Elijah was a man who listened to what God said.
- In fact, this short account of his life shows us an important principle: **God's power works through those who trust His word.**
- Although there is a lot going on in this passage, it ultimately came down to how Elijah was going to respond to what God said.
- For you and me, this is our starting point. I imagine that most of us would love for God to use us to further His kingdom and cause. We would love to be a part of seeing people get saved and grow as disciples who follow Jesus with everything they are.

- If we are going to see God display His power through us as ordinary people, we have to trust His word.

1) God's word demands that I change.

- When Elijah heard from God, he couldn't stay where he was.
- Although we don't see it in this passage, it is obvious that God told Elijah to go to Ahab and make this declaration about the coming drought.
- After that, we explicitly see God's Word coming to Elijah, telling him to go back across the Jordan River and hide by a creek.
- Finally, in **verse 8**, God's Word calls Elijah to get up and go on to his next assignment.
- Every time Elijah heard from God, it was a call to do something different.
- Each call had its own challenges and its own victories.
- The same is true today.
- Although we don't hear from God in exactly the same way Elijah did, God still speaks.
- Henry Blackaby describes it this way:
"God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways."¹
- As you read God's written word and prayerfully seek His face, God speaks to us about the sin in our own lives and the places where we can join Him in His work.
- He doesn't speak to us in a voice we hear out loud; rather, He communicates the truth to our heart in ways that can be difficult to explain at times.

¹ Henry Blackaby, *Experiencing God*.

- The primary way He speaks is through our reading and studying His word. As we read, the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to understand things about ourselves and about God that we may have never seen.
- He uses those passages to soften our hearts to needs in our own spiritual lives and in the lives of those around us.
- When we encounter God through His word like this, we must change.
- If God shows us that He is working in our hearts to change us into who He made us to be so He can use us as He sees fit, then we must be willing to change to go on with Him.
- We must trust that whatever adjustments He directs are the ones we need to make, and we must trust His word.
- Just like Elijah, we trust Him when He puts us before kings and on the backside of nowhere or with a widow that no one knows.
- We trust Him because He knows what's best!
- If you are here and you don't know Christ, then the first thing you need to hear from God's Word is that you need a relationship with Jesus, and you can only have that through His blood.
- All through God's word, we see that you need to stop trying to fix yourself and call out to God to save you.
- That may fly in the face of what you have thought about how to be a good person, but when God speaks, He demands you change.
- There is a lot about changing to honor what God says that is difficult, but perhaps the hardest part of this is the second lesson we draw out of this passage:

2) God's word doesn't always make sense to me.

- Think about this: if you want to influence a king, who would you use? Would you take a man from an unknown family, or would you try to strategically gain access to one of his advisors who could then get the ear of the king?
- It doesn't make sense to send some unknown nobody to the king, and yet that seems to be what God does.
- Okay, once you put him up there for the world to see, then what would you do next?
- He has prayed, and it isn't raining, so wouldn't you invite him to speak at conferences and write books and market his success?
- But what does God do? He sends him to hide by a creek.
- Put yourself in Elijah's shoes! God used you to speak to a king and close the skies so they wouldn't rain, and now, you are hiding by a creek eating food that birds bring you.
- Not just any birds, by the way. Ravens would have been ceremonially unclean because they are scavengers, so under normal circumstances, Elijah wouldn't eat anything a raven had in its mouth.

- What God calls Elijah to do in this passage doesn't make sense to us.
- In fact, some of it is impossible. Ask one of the crows you see in your yard to bring you some lunch and see how that goes for you.
- Yet, God keeps His word!
- For us to see God demonstrate His power through us, we have to trust His word, even when it doesn't make any sense.
- In fact, the way we see God work often in Scripture is to go against things we would normally think should happen.

- Do you want to see God work mightily? Then you have to trust Him to keep His word, even when it doesn't make sense.
- One of the major challenges we face in responding to what God says is that He doesn't usually speak when we want Him to.
- This account brings up one final lesson for us about trusting God's word:

3) God's word is always timely.

- Look back at **verses 7-9**.
- We will continue to see this theme in next week's passage, but this morning, I want to highlight this truth: God is never late when He speaks.
- However, He is also rarely early.
- When did God tell Elijah what was next for him?
- When the brook dried up.
- Can you imagine what his prayers had been like in the days leading up to this?
- Perhaps Elijah had more faith in God's word than I often do. If it had been me, I would have been saying, "God, you know, that water is getting a little stale...what's next?" "God, I've been here for a while, and things aren't quite working out. What do you want me to do?"
- Can you imagine waking up that morning and seeing that the brook had gone dry?
- Right when he reached the end of His rope, God spoke again and told Elijah what's next.
- Maybe that's what you needed to hear this morning. You have been obeying the last thing you know God called you to,

and you are frustrated because it doesn't seem to be working.

- Stay at the brook until God tells you to leave.
- But, going back to our first point, be ready to go as soon as He speaks.

- Think back over your last few days.
- Is there anything God has spoken to you that you aren't obeying? Why?
- If you want to see God at work, you must trust what He says.
- Are you getting tired and frustrated? Keep doing the last thing God told you to do until he tells you to do otherwise, even if the brook is drying up.