

February 13, 2022

Bringing Good News

1 Kings 18: 41-46



Special Music: “Touch from you” Tamela Mann

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jfIPybCnc0w>

1 Kings 18:41-46

41 And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.”

42 So 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.”

44 The 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.’”

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

46 The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

GOOD NEWS

I've got some good news
You might want to hear
Yes, it's important
So, I'll make myself clear.

There's a storm on its way
You need to prepare.
The draught's at an end
There's rain in the air

The land will turn green.
The rivers will flow.
The crops will return.
And the rain will bestow

A new image of God,
As the idols do fall
Transgressions are buried.
And most above all

God will hear you in prayer
As you prostrate before him.
No changing the moment
Your cup's filled to the brim

My words become truth.
You can dance and then prance
In puddles of grace
An undeserved chance.

To know God can see you,
He's made is all clear,
The God that created you,
Takes all your fear.

You've listened and heard Him.
You've accepted His grace.
You've remembered His promise
His love you've embraced.

So, here's a reminder
The rain's on its way
Just as God promised
It's comin' today

Get ready to plant
Your vines will take root
Your crops, they will flourish
Your trees will make fruit.

The dust, it will settle
The cattle will drink
The land will be nourished
As you step back from the brink.

The clouds, they're a' formin'
To create life anew
The rain it's a comin'
It's a comin' for you.

Our first message in this series surrounding the life of Elijah was entitled “Bringing Bad News.” In that message we talked about what it is like to be the one to bring bad news to people. Elijah, the Tishbite from Tishbe, a prophet of God, had been selected by God to inform Ahab of a coming draught so that all the people could prepare.

It’s hard to bring bad news to people. We never know how they are going to react. We would prefer not to be the ones to deliver the news of a death of a loved one or the loss of a job. It takes a lot of courage to face people and give them news that we know will change their lives forever. But somebody needs to step up to the plate in those difficult times to deliver the news. Most of us would prefer that someone else volunteer to do it.

Not so with good news. When there is good news to be spread, people stand in line hoping they are the ones to be able to tell everyone else. There are even those individuals that can’t wait to spread the word, and then take it upon themselves to do so, even if they are not involved with the news at all. This is often done to the chagrin of those people whose thunder has been stolen. That can be so frustrating as well.

It is a most satisfying thing that when you have to deliver bad news, you also the one who gets to deliver good news as well. We’ve all had a few moments like that. Like when the mechanic calls and tells us that our transmission is shot, that it will cost \$2000 to repair it. And then, a few days later he calls and tells you that the car is under warranty and there won’t be any charge. If we happen to be the mechanic, we truly do not want to make that first phone call. We can be fairly

certain that it will not be well received. But when we find out about the warranty, we are anxious to tell the customer because we know that they will be happy with the message.

So it is with Elijah. He brought that first message of draught to Ahab which did not make him a very popular person with the king. Although the story of Elijah is told in only a few chapters of 1 Kings, it covers several years. The draught has devastated the country. The story of the contest in the desert between Baal and Yahweh took place well into this draught, which is why the importance of the water on the altar is so stressed.

It is important to note that after God consumes the sacrifice, wood, stones, and desert earth around the altar, and the people of Israel have climbed down off the fence and returned to worshipping the Yahweh, the God of their ancestors. Elijah orders them to dispose of the prophets of Baal and Ashera. And the people chase them down and kill them. Which puts us where our story continues.

41 And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain."

Seems a little anti-climactic, doesn't it? At the same time, the tension has to be incredible. Ahab has just witnessed God sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice and the altar. Then he watched as all the priests of Baal and Ashera are slaughtered. And here comes Elijah approaching him.

At the same time, Elijah has just ordered the execution of all those priests, and he is probably thinking that King Ahab is probably not too happy with him.

So, this meeting is with a great deal of apprehension because neither knows what the other intends to do at this point. Will Ahab order his soldiers to kill Elijah? Or will God rain fire down on Ahab and his soldiers?

The last words that Ahab expect to hear from Elijah are “Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.” This is a prophecy of Elijah because, at this moment, there is not a cloud in the sky, much less the sound of rain. But Ahab feels like he has a target painted on his back and this is an excellent excuse to back away from the situation. If Elijah wants him to go somewhere else, he’s glad to comply. He is also probably acknowledging (after all that he has just witnessed) that if Elijah says it’s going to rain, then it is probably going to rain, even if there isn’t a cloud in the sky.

42 So 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.

At Elijah’s suggestion, Ahab trots off to have dinner. But Elijah, isn’t finished. He’s still got work to do. He climbs to the top of Mt. Carmel, bows before God, and begins to pray. Fervently. If you remember back to first time Elijah shows up and talks with Ahab about the coming draught, you will remember that he said, **“As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”**

Have you ever been to the top of a really tall mountain? You know the kind that I’m talking about. The kind of mountain that makes us feel like we must be at the very top of the world, a place where we can see for miles and miles and miles.

The kind of view that takes our breath away. There's a feeling of omnipresence that comes over us at those times, where we stand in awe of the vastness of creation making us feel dwarfed, yet inherently a part of a much bigger plan that could only come from the mind of our Creator. There is a feeling of being part of something huge and so much grander than our small minds can conceive.

That's where Elijah is. He's right there at the top of Mt. Carmel, basking in the presence of God. He is intentional as he makes his way to a place where he can embrace the awesomeness of Creation. He has seen the might of God. He has witnessed as the people returned to worship their Creator. He has seen the defeat of the prophets of Baal. The wonders of the world are stretched out before him as he sits in silence before God and listens as his mind tries to absorb everything that has happened. There seems to be a syncing of minds here as Elijah prays, "Lord, it is time," and God replies, "Elijah, it is time." Time to end the draught. Time to bring the rain. Now that the dynamic between God and God's people has been restored, it is time to un-pause and start again.

This is not a short conversation. Elijah has his servant, Gehazi, with him and throughout this time of communion with God, Elijah sends Gehazi to look at the skyline.

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."

Elijah sends him to look seven times.

At what point do we stop expecting God to answer our prayers? Do we put a number on it? “Okay, God, if you haven’t answered this prayer by the fourth time I ask for it, I will just assume that you don’t want to answer it and I will stop asking.” Wouldn’t it be great if God just said, “Pray for what you want 15 times and then I will give you what you ask for.” But it doesn’t work that way. In truth, there are times that God will answer our prayer the first time we pray about the matter. Sometimes, we must continue to pray for it. And sometimes, for our own sake, God’s answer will be ‘no.’ God’s timing is always perfect and intentional. He loves it when we come to Him with our petitions. We often need to take things before the throne several times, but we should always bring those prayers to God with the same expectation and praise that we had the very first time we brought the matter to him. There needs to be a constant fervor to our request while we embrace our time of communion with our Creator. But there is no set number of times to pray about something.

Elijah was just as expectant of the answer to his prayer the seventh time as he was the first time. And the same would have been true of the fifteenth time, if he had needed to continue in prayer. God answers our prayers, but in His own time and His own way.

44 The 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.’”

What does that small cloud in an otherwise empty sky mean? It’s like the klaxon horn that goes off before a dam is opened. Or the alarm on a drawbridge telling everyone that it is about to be raised. It’s the ding that tells us that the elevator has arrived. It is the beginning of a countdown for the launch of a missile.

When we hear these warnings sounds, we know something is about to happen. In this case, that tiny cloud in the sky signaled that rain was coming. We would be foolish to not heed the warning. We need to seek shelter because the rain that we have been waiting for has arrived. And while it is a warning to take shelter, it is also an exclamation of Good News! It is a good thing that we are forced to seek shelter, because the rain is coming. And we so need that rain to end this draught in our lives.

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

Again, Ahab takes Elijah’s suggestion, and by the time he has the horses hitched to his chariot, that little cloud has turned into an angry black sky. The wind is howling, lightning is flashing, and heavy rain begins to fall. Ahab snaps his whip and the horses rush with his chariot towards Jezreel.

46 The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

Now this must have been the perfect cap on the day. Elijah hitches up his robes, tucks them in his belt and runs ahead of Ahab's horse drawn chariot all the way to Jezreel. Please note that the passage says that **"The power of the Lord came on Elijah."** Once again, this is God providing Elijah with what he needs to accomplish his task. Elijah could not have outrun that chariot on his own.

It is a truly marvelous thing to be able to bring good news, to let everyone know that the draught has passed, we've come out on the other side, the world as we know it has changed, we have been renewed. I'm not talking about Elijah. This continued story revolving around the life of Elijah is a great analogy for what God has done for us.

Out of the draught caused by our sin and despite our continued desire to sit on the fence, God sent his son to redeem us. With a power like none of us could imagine, Jesus came into the world to wipe away our sin and bring us once again into communion with our Creator. In the words from the song by Mercy Me, "Jesus, bring the rain." God brings the joy of rain into our lives to refresh and renew us. If we sit in communion with our Heavenly Father, we can watch as the clouds form on the horizon and prepare to receive the blessing. Because God has brought that rain into our lives, the joy of the presence of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit, we are tasked with telling other of that Good News. The Good News that Jesus Christ is our risen Lord and Savior. That He has overcome the draught of death and brings the rains of grace to our soul.

**I've got some good news
You might want to hear
Yes, it's important
So, I'll make it real clear.**

**There's a storm on its way
You need to prepare.
The draught's at an end
There's rain in the air**

**The clouds, they are forming
To create life anew
The rain it's a coming
It's a coming for you.**

God bless you all,

AMEN

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