

God's strength working through us changes the world

James 5:17 is one of my favorite verses in scripture.

17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

WOW....That is quite the prayer isn't it?

Three years of no rain...I can remember a few summers ago when it was dry up in NH – we were not allowed to water the grass, and people would get fined even if they turned on the sprinkler for the kids to run through...the police would drive through the neighborhood and check that no one had any outside water moving anywhere. The grass would turn brown and there was a high risk of fire...

But I have never seen a 3-½ year drought...

I know some of you have lived in places like Arizona and California and seen huge droughts... when the rain stops, life stops... and now in the land where many thought Baal, the god of rain and dew was god, Elijah prays and shows the people and King Ahab especially- that there is no god like God

We are in week 3 of our series where we are looking at who God is-

The God of miracles who brings the dead to life,

The incredible God we worship, who makes himself known, through big, awe-inspiring acts and small whispers.

God is active, present, and deeply invested in the world and the people in it.

In this series, we are listening to God's voice through the story of Elijah. He was a prophet and the mouthpiece of the Lord, speaking words of truth to the Israelites.

As Mike reminded us 2 weeks ago, this was not a comfy job,

God's prophets were often rejected, mistreated, and met with resistance

And yet God spoke through him – To a King and a widow

We see in the book of I Kings that God shows us His patience, love, and power.

And when we pray, God moves...

And I hope we all leave today knowing that God is still looking for people who hear His voice and are willing to take steps of faith that make His name great.

1 Kings 18

The Contest on Mount Carmel

18 *Later on, in the third year of the drought, the Lord said to Elijah, "Go and present yourself to King Ahab. Tell him that I will soon send rain!"*² *So Elijah went to appear before Ahab.*

*Meanwhile, the famine had become very severe in Samaria.*³ *So Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace.*

(Obadiah, a devoted follower of the Lord. Obadiah had hidden 100 prophets of them in two caves. After Jezebel, Ahab's wife had tried to kill them. He put fifty prophets in each cave and supplied them with food and water.)

⁵ *Ahab and Obadiah were out checking springs and valley to see if they find enough grass to save at least some of my horses and mules."*

⁶ *So they divided the land between them. Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way **by himself**.*

⁷ *As Obadiah was walking along, he suddenly saw Elijah coming toward him. Obadiah recognized him at once and bowed low to the ground before him. "Is it really you, my lord Elijah?" he asked.*

⁸ “Yes, it is,” Elijah replied. “Now go and tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’”

⁹ “Oh, sir,” Obadiah protested, “what harm have I done to you that you are sending me to my death at the hands of Ahab? ¹⁰ For I swear by the Lord your God that the king has searched every nation and kingdom on earth from end to end to find you. And each time he was told, ‘Elijah isn’t here,’ King Ahab forced the king of that nation to swear to the truth of his claim. ¹¹ And now you say, ‘Go and tell your master, “Elijah is here.’”

¹² But as soon as I leave you, the Spirit of the Lord will carry you away to who knows where. When Ahab comes and cannot find you, he will kill me.

Obadiah knew God was with Elijah and now he had a choice- would he take a step of faith... This is not the first brave thing Obadiah has done...

. ¹³ Has no one told you, my lord, about the time when Jezebel was trying to kill the Lord’s prophets? I hid 100 of them in two caves and supplied them with food and water.

Prophets lived together in groups in different area of Israel and Judah, we see them throughout the old testament....and that is why he hid them in groups of 50.

¹⁵ But Elijah said, “I swear by the Lord Almighty, in whose presence I stand, that I will present myself to Ahab this very day.”

¹⁶ So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah had come, and Ahab went out to meet Elijah.

¹⁷ When Ahab saw him, he exclaimed, “So, is it really you, you troublemaker of Israel?”

Has that ever happened to you before? Someone says something not true to you? What do you do when that happens...do you delete the text, or do you read and believe it? When someone says some thing that is not true, you need to choose to not believe it...It is what Elijah, a human like us does....he speaks truth to the king.

18 "I have made no trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "You and your family are the troublemakers, for you have refused to obey the commands of the Lord and have worshiped the images of Baal instead. 19 Now summon all Israel to join me at Mount Carmel, along with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who are supported by Jezebel.[a]"

This next verse is so important...

20 So Ahab summoned all the people of Israel and the prophets to Mount Carmel.21 Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How much longer will you waver, hobbling between two opinions? If the YAHWEH, the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent.

If Yahweh is God...if He is lord follow him....

Have no other gods before him

Yet, how many things get in the way in our life? This season of my life I have not bowed to a false god made of wood, but I have allowed things like business and work get in the way of my time with God.

That is why we need to spend time in God's word every day-

so we remember...it is what the altar of 12 stones did- remind the Israelites of truth...we might use a journal, or the Bible app...but we need to remember what we easily forget..

If YAHWEH, the Lord is God, follow him!

We continue with verse 22 where we see that Ahab is not the only one that doesn't speak truth. Elijah, a human like us does as well. He believes his feelings are the truth

22 Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only prophet of the Lord who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets.

He feels alone, do you feel that way sometimes?

we know Obadiah said that 100 prophets were hidden .

Truth is that the most High God is Sovereign over the kingdoms of man...and God is about to show up in a powerful way

Elijah says

23 Now bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose whichever one they wish and cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood of their altar, but without setting fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood on the altar, but not set fire to it.

24 Then call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by setting fire to the wood is the true God!"

And all the people agreed.

25 Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "You go first, for there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls, and prepare it and call on the name of your god. But do not set fire to the wood."

26 So they prepared one of the bulls and placed it on the altar. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning until noontime, But there was no reply of any kind. Even though they danced,

27 About noontime Elijah began mocking them. "You'll have to shout louder," maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep

28 So they shouted louder, and because Baal demanded blood..., they cut themselves with knives and swords

This continued until evening sacrifice, with no sound, no reply, no response.

30 Then Elijah called to the people, "Come over here!" They all crowded around him as he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down.

31 He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel,^[c] 32 and he used the stones to rebuild the altar in the name of the Lord.

Elijah has the people of Israel watch as he rebuilds the altar that God had told Joshua to build after God has rescued the people of Israel...when God split the sea so they could walk through on dry land...because they were His children and He was their God.

And now Elijah reminds them.

Because they forgot.

The miracles God does somehow are forgotten by his children. So God told them to build an altar with 12 stones from the dry land they took when God split the sea.

So that when the children see it, they would ask – what is that – and the people of Israel would say- Yahweh is the Lord our God..

Do you forget, I do.

Then I found a journal where I written my prayers..

That is why God wants us to write it down, find a way to remember ...

God's strength working through us changes the world

So now Elijah has their attention

He walks to the bull and the altar

He digs a trench, piles wood on the altar, cuts the bull into pieces, and lays the pieces on the wood.

Then he said, *"Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood."*

³⁴ Then he said, "Do the same thing again!" And do it a third time and the water ran around the altar and even filled the trench.

Now there are 12 jugs of water, poured over the offering in a land with a drought.

That is faith- Elijah knew God would do what He said he would do

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we can't see.

Elijah walks to the altar and prays (and we see God's strength working through Elijah)

He prays

“O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. ³⁷ O Lord, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.”

Such beautiful words.

Answer me so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.”

*³⁸ Immediately **the fire of the Lord** flashed down from heaven and burned up the bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the trench!*

³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell face down on the ground and cried out, “The Lord—he is God! Yes, the Lord is God!”

Elijah – a human like us prays and God shows up and the people return to God

Instantly- they fell face down on the ground and cried out-

He is Lord- Yahweh

And yet, Elijah also changes instantly... it is said power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely

AND Elijah , a human like us..

Perhaps he is full of adrenaline, but what he does next that is shocking...

40 Then Elijah commanded, "Seize all the prophets of Baal. Don't let a single one escape!" So the people seized them all, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon Valley and killed them there.

It will be a few chapters until we see the effects of this act

How often is this true in our lives as well....we might not slaughter prophets of Baal....but God asks us to do something, and He shows up and His power transforms us and our circumstances,

and we take another faith filled step ..then a next step, and a next step....and slowly we begin to move in our own strength....not His.. faith is not our strength.

Psalm 121

1 I look up to the hills—

does my help come from there?

2 My help comes from the Lord,

who made heaven and earth!

Our strength comes from the Lord, whether we are Elijah or a human like you and me....it is God's strength working through us that changes the world. He is the author and finisher of our faith.

Do we believe that we were made to be in relationship with the one true God and any other kind of worship of something made in our image is a twisted, corruption of God's creation?

But when we pray and ask as Jesus taught us- Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, God works through us and the kingdom of God advances...

God's strength working through us that changes the world.

What does that look like in your life today?

What does it look like for us to ask God, where am I walking in your strength and where am I doing life in my strength? There is love, and joy and peace- I rest in His provision.

It looks like the impossible....calling fire from heaven is what God's power looks like.

But I know what it looks like when I try to do what God has asked me to do with His strength in my own strength...I injure people with my words ... my life lacks joy and peace...

What do we do when we realize that we are doing life in our own power? Confess, repent and rest in God's love...because loved people, love people.

We began our time together in James 5-verse 16 says

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

Each Tuesday night, and in journey groups through out the week- we meet in small groups to pray- for our church, for one another

For our nation and for people to find their way back to God.

Because the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Jesus modeled a life of prayer.

Jesus was not like you and me. He was fully man, but He was also fully divine. And yet he prayed – for God's will on earth as it is in heaven

Jesus spoke about Elijah in Luke 4:16-¹⁶ *When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures.*

¹⁷ The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

*18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free,
19 (and to proclaim) and that the time of the Lord's favor has come.^[a]"*

This verse impacted me when I was a young mom. God's spirit was upon me, not just for my strength and my peace...but so I could share the good news.

It is why our church exists...to HPFTWBTG

So we can be set free to live fully, love deeply and give freely.

Luke continues and tells us that Jesus talked about Elijah that day and reminded the people of Nazareth how God uses ordinary people like you and me and Elijah

A man, just like us

He had flaws and he had faith

He had strengths and he had weaknesses.

Scripture is full of people just like Elijah who God used in spite of their failures.

But scripture also points to the one who knew no sin, but became sin. Who put on flesh and dwelt with us.

Jesus came and lived a perfect life and gave His life for you and me- to reconcile us to God so we can stand here today, loved- forgiven and chosen. You are a child of God.

With the power of God in us- we are no longer a slave to fear, or anger or shame...we know we are who God says we are!

Elijah did not stop the rain, God did.

God sent the fire and God brought the people of Israel back to Him.

Maybe today- you are recognizing that still small voice calling you.. back to God.

Believe He loves you .

He died for you ..and wants you to know you are his loved child...

And when we know we are who God says we are, we love others...we pray bold prayers and stand in the gap for those far from him.

My prayer is we would leave here today proclaiming these truths..

God has delivered us from our enemies, he calls us by name and has liberated us...we are set free to be the sons and daughters of the most high God.

Elijah was just like you and me- a loved child of God.

And when we believe that
God's strength works through us, and changes the world

Pray-

Thank you

Lord will you help me, pray with confidence

Knowing you are with you and me are for me

Because you are good and you love me,

Thank you that you are my Father and we are your children.