



TRI-PARISH MAIL MINISTRY

Grace
Valentine

Peace
Mission

St. Paul's
White River

Trinity 14

September 10, 2023

Pre-Service Meditation: Psalm

Hymns:

Scripture Readings:

Sermon Topic: Faith; Word of God; Christian Life

In Jesus' Name!

Text: 1 Kings 17:17-24 NKJV

Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him. So she said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?" And he said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. Then he cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?" And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him." Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives!" Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth."

In Christ Jesus, who teaches us to walk by faith and not by sight, dear fellow redeemed:

Of what are you afraid? If your immediate response is to say, "Nothing," I would suggest that perhaps you are not thinking through the question well enough, or perhaps you are deceiving yourself. Fear affects virtually everyone. Fear is probably the most common and among the most damaging of Satan's weapons. People are afraid of snakes, spiders, or dogs. People are afraid of contracting diseases, undergoing surgeries, or experiencing disabilities. People are afraid of market crashes, potential bankruptcies, and identity theft. People are afraid of growing old, the possibility of Alzheimer's, and certainly the inevitability of death. So, I ask you again, "Of what are you afraid?"

Let me ask you a follow-up question: "Of what need you be afraid as a child of God?" Now, your answer can and should be, "Nothing!" After all, as the Bible reminds us, *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom. 8:31) While we want to have due caution, we really do not have to live in fear of reptiles, insects, or animals, for God is with us. While matters of health and finance must be carefully considered, once again we do not have to fear future possibilities, for God holds us in His hands. And yes, while there are seasons in each of our lives, even death, that great consequence of sin and final enemy of this life, need not be feared, for the Bible tells us that Jesus came into this world to share our humanity for this specific purpose, *"that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* (Heb. 2:14-15)

God never intended that fear should play a role in any of our lives. Fear, however, is part of every one of our lives, just as death is part of our lives—all because of sin. **GOD'S GOAL IS TO MOVE US FROM FEAR TO FAITH!** How does He accomplish that goal? As we shall see from our text, God accomplishes that goal through Jesus! First, **Jesus has overcome sin!** Second, **Jesus has overcome death!** Finally, **Jesus' word is the truth!** May God bless our study of His Word today!

I.

Our text today is the continuation of a more familiar historical account dealing with the prophet Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. God had sent Elijah to this destitute widow and her son during a severe drought in Israel. He lived with her for about two years, and we are told that throughout that time her *“bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah.”* (1 Kgs. 17:16)

As our text begins tragedy has struck. We are told that the widow’s son became sick and that *“his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him.”* In other words, he died. Imagine the sorrow facing this woman. She had already lost her husband—of what we are not sure, but now she had lost her only child...her beloved son. In her grief she cried out: *“What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?”*

It is interesting that the woman immediately connected this tragedy to her past sin and assumed that God was punishing her for that sin. I am afraid that is a rather common thought. Many people are troubled by past sins, and while they may try to bury such anxieties in the deepest recesses of their hearts and minds, that sense of guilt and those fears surface during times of trouble. People assume all too often that God is somehow punishing them for their past sins.

For the child of God this is never the case! We can be absolutely certain of that fact because **Jesus has overcome sin!** After Adam and Eve first sinned, and as they stood there in the garden bickering over who was to blame for the fall—failing to accept personal responsibility and unable to even begin to deal with sin, God announced that He would solve the problem. He would send the *“Seed”* of the woman to crush Satan’s head (cf. Gen. 3:15). That *“Seed”* of the woman was Jesus. He did come and He crushed Satan, first, by successfully resisting every one of his temptations. This He did on our behalf, because this is something we cannot and have not done. Think of Jesus’ temptations by Satan in the wilderness. Satan tried to undermine Jesus’ trust in His Father, to get Jesus unnecessarily to test His Father, and finally to tempt Jesus to abandon His Father...but to no avail. Jesus used God’s Word to overcome Satan’s temptations, to avoid sin, and thereby to overcome sin. The apostle Paul assures us: *“As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.”* (Rom. 5:19)

Jesus then overcame sin by becoming *“sin for us.”* (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21) When Jesus died on the cross it was not simply a matter of Jewish plots or a miscarriage of Roman justice. Rather Jesus died in fulfillment of God’s eternal plan to have His Son bear the full weight of divine judgment upon humanity’s sin. The Bible tells us that Jesus *“Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”* (1 Jn. 2:2)

God promises to forgive our sins for the sake of Jesus’ righteous life and His innocent death. He assures us in His Word that *“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 Jn. 1:7) God simply calls upon us to confess our sins, and He confirms for us that He is *“faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 Jn. 1:9) Consequently, in view of Jesus, God can and does declare us righteous.

Therefore, we do not have to fear that when troubles arise God is punishing us for past sins! Jesus has already borne the punishment of those sins and they are gone forever. Rather, when troubles arise, the apostle Paul tells us that we can *“glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”* (Rom. 5:3) My dear friends, **GOD’S GOAL IS TO MOVE US FROM FEAR TO FAITH!** He can accomplish this in our lives because **Jesus has overcome sin!**

II.

He can accomplish this as well because **Jesus has overcome death!** When the widow came to Elijah crying out in distress over the death of her son, Elijah took the boy up to his room and laid him on his bed. We are told: *“Then he cried out to the LORD and said, ‘O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?’”* He then laid himself

across the child three times and cried out, “O LORD my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him.” That is exactly what the LORD God then did! The child’s life was restored. Death was overcome, and Elijah gave the little boy back to his now jubilant mother.

The greatest enemy of humanity is death. The raising of this little boy to life was a foretaste of what Jesus would accomplish. Near the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus stood before the tomb of Lazarus and wept in view of the sorrow that sin and death inflicted upon those He loved. But Jesus was not powerless in the face of death. Rather, as He had assured His disciples upon first hearing of Lazarus’ illness, “*this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.*” (Jn. 11:4) Jesus declared Himself to be “*the resurrection and the life*” (cf. Jn. 11:25) and demonstrated that this was not mere boasting by calling Lazarus out of the tomb! Just weeks later as Jesus hung on the cross He committed His Spirit to His heavenly Father and allowed Himself to die. Three days later He demonstrated His power over death by rising from the grave. As He had declared earlier, He was Shepherd who had power to lay His life down and He had the power to take it back again! (Jn. 10:18) In this way, as we have already noted, Jesus defeated Satan and removed his ability to use the prospect of death to frighten us. Indeed, **GOD’S GOAL IS TO MOVE US FROM FEAR TO FAITH!** He can accomplish this in our lives because **Jesus has overcome death!**

III.

He can accomplish this, finally, because **Jesus’ word is the truth!** When Elijah restored to the widow a living son, she exclaimed: “*Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth.*” The miracle God enabled Elijah to do confirmed for this widow the truth of the LORD’s words as proclaimed by Elijah. This ultimately was the purpose of every miracle performed by any of God’s prophets throughout biblical history, and it was certainly the purpose of the miracles performed by Jesus Himself.

God’s intention by giving us His word is quite simply to remove fear. God’s word...Jesus’ word provides a firm foundation for our faith and our lives as His children in this world. The apostle Paul assures us that our faith and life are to be “*built upon the foundation of the prophets and the apostles* (in other words, the Old and New Testaments), *Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.*” (Eph. 2:20) Jesus and His words, therefore, are the touchstone—the means by which everything else is to be measured and judged. Do you want to know whether someone is speaking the truth when it comes to spiritual matters or moral issues? Compare what they say with what the Bible says. If they are the same, you may proceed with confidence.

Having removed fear, Jesus’ word instills within us fullness of joy. The apostle John informs us as he begins his 1st Epistle that Jesus is the “*Word of life*” which the apostles proclaimed so that all who believe might enter into fellowship with the Father and with each other. “*These things we write to you,*” he says, “*that your joy may be full.*” (1 Jn. 1:1-4) When you and I know our Savior God and are convinced of His love and certain that His plans for our futures cannot but be fulfilled, we do not need to fear outward circumstances, no matter what those circumstances might be.

After the apostle Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and nearly killed in a riot, Jesus appeared to him in a dream and announced that he would proclaim the gospel in Rome. (cf. Acts 23:11) Hearing those words and being assured of their truth removed any reason for Paul to fear his captors, fear his enemies, or later fear the storms he encountered while enroute to Rome. **Jesus’ word is the truth!**

It is true for you and me! While Jesus may not appear to us in dreams, He certainly addresses us with the promises of His word. Those promises are intended to have the same effect in our lives that the word had in Paul’s life and that the LORD’s word had in the widow of Zarephath’s life. My dear friends, **GOD’S GOAL IS TO MOVE US FROM FEAR TO FAITH.** May that be the case for each of us! Amen.

Prepared by Pastor Paul D. Nolting
To God alone be the glory!