



Sermon – October 21, 2018
Nathan Lino

Verses Covered

1 Kings 17:1 - 24

Hi y'all. Won't you open your Bible in the Old Testament to 1 Kings 17. 1 Kings 17. As you're turning there, there is no way Nicole and I could possibly express to you how much we love Central. Our marriage and our ministry was birthed in this place. We graduated in 1998 and to this day, 20 years later, you continue to invest in our lives through so many of your ministries including the Central Aggie Pastors Ministry and Retreat every year in allowing Chris and Peggy to invest in our lives, in our marriage, in our ministry. Central, Nicole and I love you and owe you a debt of gratitude we could never repay. Thank you for all that you have done for us over the years. We are the product of this church.

I'm going today by reading the entire, yeah, glory to God. I want to begin today by reading this entire chapter of 1 Kings 17. I realize it's quite a few verses, but you'll see why in a minute. It's essential we read them all. So here we go. 1 Kings 17, verse 1. And the word of the Lord says this.

¹Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe, in Gilead,

If you don't know who that is, he's an Old Testament prophet of God.

said to King Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my words." i.e. there's now a drought. ²And the word of the LORD came to Elijah, ³"Depart from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁴You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." ⁵So Elijah went and did according to the word of the LORD, he went and lived by the brook Cherith, that is east of the Jordan. ⁶And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, y'all, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook. ⁷And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

⁸Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah, ⁹"Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there; behold, I've commanded a widow there to feed you." ¹⁰So Elijah

arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."¹¹ And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."¹² And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug; and now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die."¹³ Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and for your son."¹⁴ For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "The jar of flour shall not be spent and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth."¹⁵ She went and did as Elijah said, and she and he and her household ate for many days.¹⁶ The jar of flour was not spent neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that He spoke by Elijah.

¹⁷ After this, the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; and his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. (i.e. he died. The widow's son died.)¹⁸ And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You've come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!"¹⁹ And he said to her, "Give me your son." And Elijah took the son from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where Elijah lodged, and laid the dead body on his own bed.²⁰ And Elijah cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have You brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?"²¹ Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, pray You, let this child's life come into him again."²² And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah y'all, and the life of the child came into him again and he revived. (he came back to life. True story).²³ And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son lives."²⁴ And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

When I was a student here at A&M, a young lady convinced me that we should take country/western dance lessons. The problem is, I am that man with no rhythm. On the other hand, she is a great dancer. And when our first lesson came, all of my fears came true in the first two minutes as I was standing all over her toes and feet, swinging her into other people, and our bodies were colliding in very unnatural ways. I'm surprised she showed up for the second lesson. She should have come in steel-toed caterpillar boots and home plate, umpire protection gear. I had no discernable rhythm or pattern that she could follow. And so for her, it became a very confusing and discouraging experience trying to follow my lead.

When you walk with God in this world, if you don't understand He has a clear and distinguishable rhythm and pattern to the way He moves, walking with Him can become a very confusing and discouraging experience. Some of you desperately want to walk with the Lord, but you don't understand how it all works together and how you get in lockstep with Him. Because you don't know or understand God has a very clear pattern by which He moves in this world. And what I want you to know today from the word of God is that if you can understand how He works and get in lockstep with Him, you are going to find walking with God to be the most exhilarating

experience of your life. It is fantastic, y'all. And in these two stories put back to back seemingly unrelated, God is actually, by putting these two stories back to back, showing us clearly the pattern by which He moves in this world. For though these two stories are different, they both unfold on the same pattern and rhythm. These two stories together expose the pattern by which God moves in this world. So if you're taking notes, what I would encourage you to do is to just write down the steps to the pattern by which God moves in this world.

1. Number one, in both stories, God caused or allowed instability in the life of His follower. God caused or allowed instability in the life of His follower. Look at verse 2 and verse 3 where the word of the Lord came to Elijah and said, "I want you to move, relocate." In the second story after the brook Cherith has dried up, God again comes to Elijah and says, "I want you to move." I want you to relocate and go and live in a different place. I want you to leave the familiar, your routine, everything you know and go and live in a place that is unfamiliar to you. God caused or allowed instability in the life of His follower.
2. Next, God promised extraordinary provision. God promised extraordinary provision. Did you notice in the first story that God said to Elijah, "Yes, I'm asking you to relocate and I want you to go to live by the brook Cherith. But here's the deal, I'm going to have wild animals feed you every day." Just so you can get a grasp of what God was saying to Elijah that day, that would be like God saying to you, "I want you to go and live in the piney woods of east Texas, in the forest. And every morning and evening, I'm going to have raccoons bring you homemade tortillas and a rotisserie chicken." That's what God said to Elijah. He promised extraordinary provision. Wild animals are going to feed you. But the provision in the second story was even more extraordinary. Do you know that Sidon, where this widow lived, was the seat of Baal worship, the great false religion of the day? It was a dark place, a demonic stronghold. In the Old Testament, Satan is called the Prince of Tyre and Sidon. Do you notice that this widow, when she spoke to Elijah, said the Lord your God? She was probably a part of that false religion. But not only was she part of a whole other religion altogether, she was a poverty stricken single mom. And God says to Elijah, "I want you to move to this other place and there I've appointed a poverty stricken single mom, who doesn't even know where her next meal is coming from, a woman from another faith altogether, and I've put it in her heart to invite you to live with her and she's going to feed you every day." So this would be like God saying to you, "I want you to move to some God-forsaken place like Arkansas. And there I've appointed a Muslim poverty stricken single mom and she's going to invite you to come and live with her and she's going to take care of you every day." God promised extraordinary provision.
3. Next, God's follower trusted and obeyed before God ever provided. God's follower trusted and obeyed before God ever provided. It says incredibly in the text in verse 5,

⁵So Elijah went to the brook Cherith and did according to the word of God.

It says in verse 10,

¹⁰So Elijah just arose and went to Zarephath doing according to the word of the Lord.

God's follower trusted and obeyed before there was any evidence God was actually going to deliver on His promise.

4. Next in both stories, God actually delivered with His extraordinary promise of provision. God actually came through on His commitment. When Elijah was sitting around his campfire by the brook Cherith in the wilderness, just waiting at dinnertime for something miraculous to happen, it actually happened. Ravens flew in with homemade tortillas and a rotisserie chicken. And when he got to Zarephath in Sidon, he just walked to the first city he came to and lo and behold, there at the city gates actually was a poverty stricken single mom from another religion waiting for him. God delivered on His promise of extraordinary provision.
5. Here's what happened next. In both stories, apparent disaster struck. Apparent disaster struck. In the first story in verse 7, the brook dried up. If you're living in the desert and your water source ends, that's a bad day; disaster struck. In the second story in verse 17, the widow's son died. Apparent disaster struck. And then finally in the pattern, what we see is that in both stories, what appeared to be disaster actually turned out to be God setting the table to display His glory. In both tables, stories, the apparent disaster turned out to be God setting the table to display His glory. The brook Cherith drying up in verse 7 led to the miracle of God in verse 16 of the jars of flour and oil never running out. The widow's son dying in verse 17 led to the miracle of God, in verse 22, of raising a human being from death to life. In both stories, the apparent disaster turned out to be God setting the table to display His glory.

Did you catch the pattern? Quick recap. God calls or allowed instability in the life of His follower. God promised extraordinary provision. God's follower trusted and obeyed before God gave any evidence or providing. God came through and secured his life. After a while, apparent disaster struck. But it turned out the apparent disaster was God setting the table to display His glory. Brothers and sisters; this is the consistent pattern of God and His activity in the world. This is His rhythm. If you are going to walk with God, this is the way it's going to be. Now we have some thinkers in the room and I love that. And I know what you're saying right now. That guy up there with the crazy accent has lost his mind. You see, Elijah was a special man with a special anointing we don't have. So just because this was true for Elijah, doesn't mean it's true for all of us. Yes, it does. You know how we know? The proof's in the story. It wasn't just true for Elijah. It was true for the widow also. God caused and allowed instability in her life. You know why she didn't have any food in the pantry? Because there was a famine. You know why there was a famine? Because God caused a drought. But God promised extraordinary provision for her. Where does God talk to her in the passage? Do you remember? Elijah is an Old Testament prophet of God. So when he's acting in the capacity of a prophet, it's not him speaking to the woman, but God speaking through him to the woman so that when Elijah's speaking to her, it's God speaking to her. And do you notice what God promised her? If you will take the last of your oil and the last of your flour and go and make bread and bring it to me, if you will just do what I'm asking you to do, I promise you I will prepare for you and provide for you and you will never go hungry. He promised extraordinary provision. What happened next in the story with the widow? She went and did what God asked her to do. She took the last of her oil and the last of the flour and she

obeyed before there was any evidence God would come through. Do you know what happened next? The never ending jar of oil and flour. God delivered on His promise.

And after a while apparent disaster struck her life. Her son died. But it turned out God was setting the table to display God's glory. God raised him from the dead. See it's not just true of Elijah. The other person in the story that interacted with God experienced the exact same pattern. This is what it's like to walk with God. Now I know some of you are saying, "Well that's so Old Testament. That's from the other side of the cross. How do we know that this is still true under the new covenant?" Well have you stopped to consider that this is the way God interacts with the entire human race from the beginning to the end of the Bible? In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. That includes the human race. And He created us to live in a love relationship with Him, a marriage if you will, which is a relationship entered into by two human beings willingly and voluntarily. He did not create you to worship Him and follow Him because you are robotically programmed to do so. He created you in order for you to willingly enter into marriage with Him.

So if He created us with the ability to choose Him, He created us with the capacity to reject Him, which is exactly what the human race promptly did. We rejected the rightful, good, proper, authority of God in our lives which brought the curse of sin upon the world. Instability. God allowed instability in His relationship with the human race. But immediately, God promised extraordinary provision. In Genesis 3:15, God promised He would send a Messiah one day that would crush the head of the serpent and the curse of sin. And then the saints have all trusted and obeyed long before the Messiah ever appeared. Noah, Abraham, David, Elizabeth, Mary. They trusted and obeyed and lo and behold, y'all, God delivered on His extraordinary promise of provision for us by taking on human flesh, coming into this world, our Lord Jesus Christ, to save us and the human race. But then after a while, apparent disaster struck. He was executed by the Roman empire on a cross. But lo and behold, His death was merely God setting the table to display His glory. When He raised His son from the dead on the third day. And 40 days after that, ascended Him back to heaven where He now sits at the right hand of the throne of God. Sovereignly ruling over the universe. Reconciling all things for God and before God and one day Jesus Christ is coming again in the flesh. And He's going to get us and He's going to take us home. God promised and God delivered. This is the pattern by which God has interacted with the entire human race since the beginning. This is how He moves in this world. But have you also stopped to consider that this is how it is in the relationship even between God the Father and God the Son? Once upon a time God the Father said to His son, "I want you to leave Heaven and all the glories of this place and go and live on earth in that world under the curse of sin." God caused instability in the life of His son. But God promised to miraculously, supernaturally, secure His life during His time on earth. And Jesus trusted and obeyed and came. And God delivered on His promise to protect Christ. God the Father sent angels to minister to Christ in His time of need. God didn't let anyone touch Christ until it was the fullness of time. And even when Jesus Christ got arrested, God the Father was still in absolute control.

And then apparent disaster struck. He was unjustly executed. But it turned out, it was God the Father setting the table in God the Son's life to display God's glory. God gloriously raised Him from the dead on the third day and has exalted Him. If this is the way it is for the Son who is perfect, why would you think you're the exception? This is the pattern of God. If you want to

walk with Him, if you want to know Him, if you want to experience life secured by the Creator of the universe, just understand His pattern, sync up with Him, and walk in lockstep with Him. So here's my exhortation to you this morning brothers and sisters. Embrace the pattern of God. Embrace the pattern of God. You are not the exception. If the Son of God is not the exception, neither are you. Your life is going to feel unstable as long as you live in this world. Some of you are determined that you're the exception. You are determined you can sit up a dreamy life where you're going to have dreamy romance, dreamy parenting, dreamy home, dreamy job in a dreamy city, and everything's going to be great. You're planning some kind of Instagram life. That's not real world. You live in planet earth that is covered by the curse of sin. You are going to suffer the consequences of your sin in this world. Though God is gracious and merciful, the limit the consequences, you will still suffer the consequences of your sin. You will also be the collateral damage of the sin of the people around you. Sin is so heinous it never affects just the sinner, but the people around them too. The earth is cursed by sin. The Llano River is going to have a flash flood. Harvey is going to blow into Houston. You live in a world under the curse of sin. Life's unstable, but it's not just the curse of sin that makes life unstable, we follow a God whose thoughts are not like our thoughts. His ways are not like our ways. God's logic to the human mind is counter intuitive. He says crazy things to us like the way up is down. The first will be last. The last will be first. He's so counter intuitive, life's unstable. You're going to show up at work and they're going to announce impending layoffs. It's going to be October 21st and you're graduating in December and you don't have a job and it seems like everyone else does. You're going to be earning commission and suddenly find out your bread and butter account has switched providers on you. Life's unstable. But God has promised extraordinary provision.

He has made these repeated promises in the Bible. For example, Matthew 6:33, if you will just seek first the kingdom of God and my righteousness, all these things will be added to you. And these things in Matthew 6 is literally every single need you have from your physical needs to your emotional needs, your spiritual needs. God has promised extraordinary provision. Can I just remind you this morning that every good and perfect gift in your life comes from above, James 1:17. God, our Father, is the source of all goodness in our lives. So does your paycheck come from Exxon/Mobil, Texas A&M University, Starbucks, Central? Or does your paycheck come from God in Heaven? Is God the source and your employer the PVC pipe through which the money's currently coming? Or is the employer the source? So can God change the PVC pipe? If you show up to work tomorrow and they say you're laid off, is your life any more insecure? Have you been cut off from the source of goodness? Or has He just changed the PVC pipe? Do you know every ounce of pleasure you derive from your marriage is not coming from your spouse? It's coming from God in Heaven, the source of every good thing. Your spouse is the PVC pipe through which God is pouring that pleasure into you. So if you are widowed this week, have you been cut off from the source of goodness? Every ounce of pleasure you derive from parenting. That pleasure is a gift from Heaven through the PVC pipe of your child. Every ounce of joy you derive from living in College Station, that joy is not coming from College Station. It's coming from the throne room of heaven. College Station is the PVC pipe. And God your father is standing before you today saying, "You live in a world that is unstable, but I am making a promise to you. I, God, who cannot go back on His word, I'm promising you. I, who own everything, the cattle on a thousand hills, I am promising to secure your life. And I have limitless kinds of PVC pipe. Do you trust me? You trust me?" OK. If you do, then you go first. Trust and obey.

It's the next step in the pattern. Trust and obey before you ever see the PVC pipe. Trust and obey before you see any evidence of God's provision. God says, "Without faith it's impossible to please me. But with faith, you can move a mountain." If we're Spanish bullfighters, faith is the red cape and God is the bull. Not in the sense that we can control Him, direct Him, or manipulate Him, but in the sense that the bull is triggered by that red cape. So it is with God. He has told us Himself, "Hey! Understand my wiring. I'm triggered by faith. Anytime I see trust and obey, I move." Says the Lord. Without faith it's impossible to please me, but with faith you can move a mountain. If you just take steps of obedience to what I've told you, I will pour out my supernatural grace. You won't even believe what I'm willing to do for you to secure your life. I love you so much. We're in a marriage remember, says the Lord. What are you scared of? What are you scared of? What's scaring you right now and overwhelming you right now? What's confusing you right now? The word of the Lord came to Elijah, he just arose and went and did it. You know what your next step is in the midst of the confusion? The darkness, the discouragement, the fear, the next step is for you to say, "God what does Your word say?" Open the Bible, see what God's word says about your situation, block out all the noise, and just go do it. Trust and obey. The ravens will fly in. You can't find in the Bible exactly a discussion about your situation, that's why God's given you shepherds and other Godly leaders in this church. Find a Godly leader and seek Godly wisdom and just say, "What would God say about my situation?" And when you have Godly counsel, just go and do it. Some of you need to quit polling the audience of all the friends in your life. "What would you do? What would you do? What?" You're just like a professional pollster. But you don't actually get around to obeying. And you're waiting on God like, "Where is He? Why hasn't He moved?" And God's going, "What's wrong with you? Why haven't you moved?" And you're having like a standoff. God's like, "I'm ready to move. I'm ready to go. I've got limitless resources. Limitless PVC pipes ready to roll. All you've got to do is trust and obey. Just hurry up and obey. Just take one step of obedience and I will be triggered." Some of you haven't experienced the power of God in your life in months and it's because months ago He asked you to do something and you haven't done it. You didn't obey. So you're in a waiting game with God now. Thanks to His grace, you can go back and do it. And you can trust that God will provide. You're not jumping off a cliff, y'all. God will provide. How do you know? Do you remember how Jesus got inside of you, Christian? You trusted and obeyed the knowledge of the truth. You trusted that God created you and therefore you belong to Him. You trusted the truth that you've rejected Him. You've trusted the truth that what you deserve is to be cut off from God now and forever in Hell. But you trusted the truth also that He sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to pay the penalty for your rejection of God and that Christ rose again on the third day, and now stands as the one who can forgive you of it all and restore you to God. And you trusted that anyone who by faith that turns to Jesus and says, "Lord, would you come into my life and save me?" You've trusted His promise that He will and that He'll come and live inside of you. And so because you trusted, you obeyed. And you turned to Heaven and you said, "Lord, come into my life and save me." And what happened? Your trust and obedience, asking Him to come in, triggered a miracle of God by which God came and lived in you. That's how Jesus got in you, Colossian 1:26 & 27, this is the mystery of the Gospel, Christ in you, the hope of glory. And now Jesus is in you every single place you go. So that anytime you're in a situation where you don't see God moving, but you're trusting He's there, and He is, and that He'll come through. The way you know He's going to come through and you respond to trust and obey is that's how Jesus got inside of you. You trusted and obeyed and God responded. And if He did it to save you, surely He can do it to get you money. That's far less than saving your soul. Christ is the proof. God will

come through if you trust and obey. And from time to time, disaster is going to strike your life. Your spouse might die. Your child might die. You may have been diagnosed with cancer. You may shockingly get laid off. Your parent may die. Disaster will strike. But God never wastes human life or spends human life in vain. Never. He loves you. Disaster is always God setting the table to display His glory. He may not give you the privilege of seeing how His glory's being displayed, but He's given you His promise that it is. So if you encounter disaster this week, though it will be painful and it's good and right to grieve, it's not the end of the world. God is setting the table to display His glory through you and your situation. You can trust Him.

What will you do with this? Will you take this pattern and lay it like a matrix upon your life? This is the pattern, the rhythm, by which God moves as life's seemingly unstable right now. Has disaster struck?

I'm going to ask you to bow your head and close your eyes. As we respond to our Lord, Jesus Christ, this morning, He loves you so much. As we sung a few minutes ago, He's ready to do it again. Great is His faithfulness. He's waiting for you to respond in humility and trust and obedience. He's ready to roll. So for our response time this morning, as always at this church, pastors will be in the front ready to receive you. If you want to become a Christian, when I say "Go", please come and talk to one of them privately in the front and just say, "Please walk me through how to become a Christian. I want to accept Jesus as my Savior and Lord." Please by all means do that if you need to. But church family, I open up the altar area this morning for just a couple of minutes. When I say "Go" some of you need to come and get on your knees publicly before the Lord and pray the prayer that man in the New Testament prayed before Christ about his ailing child that needed healing and say, "Lord Jesus I believe, but please help my unbelief. I know in my mind I can trust You. I know in my mind what You've promised. But would You move that to my heart?" Some of you need to come and confess to the Lord at the altar this morning, fear and panic and anxiety and lack of trust. Some of you have experienced disaster and you should come and get on your knees before the Lord and seek His comfort and ask Him to birth greater faith in your heart to trust that He's glorifying Himself and will continue to do so through the disaster that has struck your life. Jesus is here. He's ready to receive you. Only trust and obey.

Lord Jesus, we give You this moment. May You be glorified in Your church. Would Your word this morning birth great faith in our hearts and lives. It's in Christ's name we pray.

OK. If you want to come and kneel at the front, would you just start coming right now and just get on your knees before the Lord. Just for a couple of minutes, if you want to become a Christian, come and talk to one of these Godly men or women here waiting in the front. They'd love to help you. I'm just going to wait a couple of minutes and then we're going to close. OK.

If God's speaking to you today, come one. We want to pray with you. Come speak with one of the ministers at the front. You can kneel here and just do business with God. Don't let this moment pass if you hear His voice.

We're going to move into our time of offering. But if God's speaking to you, if you're doing business with Him, this altar is going to stay open. The ministers are going to be in place. You

can come at any moment even as we move into the offering and as we begin to respond to the Lord. You continue in faith. Jeff will you voice a prayer for our offering and lead us please?

Let's pray.

Father we just thank You for a powerful message about a powerful God. Lord we know there's many needs represented in this room whether they be financial or health or loss or grief. We know that you're capable. We're reminded of Your word in James how Elijah was a man like we are, and yet effective prayer of righteous men avails much. So we pray that You would bless this time of offering, bless this time of invitation, and may this truth be real in our lives this week and in our lives ahead. In Jesus name. Amen.