



Surrey Hills

BAPTIST CHURCH

“One of Our Kind”

Dr. Wendell Lang

I remember speaking to a gentleman who was telling me about an individual who had moved into the community. He said, “Now, Pastor, you will really want to get to know this guy because he is ‘one of us.’” I asked myself, “What in the world is ‘one of us’?” For us, here at Surrey Hills, “one of us” is someone who has a pulse. We don’t have a particular style of people that we are interested in. It is not based on demographics or socioeconomics. God has just brought a group of people together who have one common purpose and that is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

I kind of understand what the man meant because the Bible says in James 5:17, *“Elijah was a man just like us.”* He was “one of us.” We are going to see today and again tonight in this book about Elijah who was a man much like us. Although you have to understand he was a king. He had followed after this great line of kings, some of them very poor—one by the name of Rehoboam. Rehoboam was a guy who had followed his daddy, Solomon. The people told Rehoboam that his dad was hard on them, and they wanted him to cut them some slack and give them a break. Rehoboam responded back to the people, “You think my dad was hard, I’m going to be twice as hard on you.”

It was at that time that became one of the darkest days in the nation of Israel, what we would call today a “civil war.” In 922 BC, there developed a schism or a division or a civil war. One group of people went to the north, and they would keep the name “Israel.” There was another group of people that went to the south, and they would take on the name of “Judah.” If you want to understand the Bible, much of the Old Testament has to do with what happened with these two groups, Israel and Judah. What happened just a couple of hundred years later was that the northern group was destroyed; they were overtaken. The southern group hung on a little bit longer until 587 BC, and then the Babylonians took them over. The Assyrians had taken over the north and the Babylonians the south. There was this great king, perhaps one of the most terrible guys who ever came to the northern kingdom, called Ahab. Ahab’s wife was a real Jezebel. As a matter of fact, she was the first Jezebel—that was her name. She really tried to get all of these Israelites to worship this terrible, ugly, senile god called “Baal.” Baal was a fertility god. They would do these drunken orgies, and they would worship this god who believed his face was in the sun. When the clouds would come, they would think that those were the showers of blessings from Baal.

Then, in came a man, the Bible says *“just like us.”* He was a normal guy by the name of Elijah. God is going to use Elijah in a lot of different ways. As a matter of fact, Elijah is one of the three guys that are with Jesus in the New Testament on the Mount of Transfiguration. He is right there with Moses. John the Baptist came to actually fulfill the work of Elijah. If you read Revelation, you will see that Elijah has a place in there. Even in Malachi, Elijah is mentioned. I want you to see today that this huge leader, this prophet of God, Elijah, was really much like us. Tonight we are going to study about how he got depressed. He was truly down and out and despondent

and depressed. I want us to see that God had raised up this man, Elijah, to stand against those who were encouraging folks to worship this fertility god named Baal.

In 1 Kings 17:1, the Bible says, "*Now Elijah the Tishbite.*" Leave your finger right there and look over in verse 24. Elijah goes from being "Elijah the Tishbite," to in verse 24, "*Then the woman said to Elijah, 'Now I know you are a man of God.'*" This is our desire today—that we would go from being wherever we're from to being a "man of God."

Elijah Had Struggles

He had struggles just like we do. Elijah was going to have to go and do his basic training. He is going to have to learn some lessons. He would see that there would be trials. There would be miracles in his life. There would be events of preparation. We'll pick up in verse 1 Kings 17:2, "*Then a revelation from the LORD came to him:* ³ *'Leave here, turn eastward, and hide yourself at the Wadi Cherith.'*" Maybe your Bible says, "*by the Brook Cherith.*" It's the same place. God is telling him, "*Leave here, turn eastward, and hide yourself at the Wadi Cherith where it enters the Jordan.* ⁴ *You are to drink from the wadi. I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.*" Elijah certainly had some struggles.

There are certainly people in my neighborhood that like to feed the birds. I think that is great if that is what you are into. But how many times have you actually seen that the birds are feeding mankind. God says, "Elijah, my prophet who is going to stand against these prophets of Baal, I want you to leave where you are. I want you to go to the east. I want you to go into this ravine, and I am going to provide for you something to drink, and I am going to have the ravens feed you."

Notice in verse 5, "*So he did what the LORD commanded.*" It is a wonderful lesson of obedience to see that when God tells us to do something, the best thing for us to do in our life is just to simply do it. God did this amazing thing. He provided this brook in the midst of this ravine. He provided ravens to come and to feed him. Now, ravens are scavengers. What ravens like to do is to find something that is dead, and then they like to go and feast on that which is dead. Do you find it interesting that our God suspended the laws of nature, and these birds who typically feed on something that is dead now are being used by God to bring meat to God's servant Elijah.

Look in verse 6, "*The ravens kept bringing him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening, and he drank from the wadi.*" That is curious to me. There had to be some place that these ravens were getting the food. They weren't creating it. They weren't manufacturing it, so somewhere these ravens had to be getting this food and bringing it to Elijah. I don't know for sure, but I wondered in my mind if those birds weren't going to the table of Ahab and Jezebel and getting the food from those scoundrels and taking it to provide for God's man. I don't know, but it is certainly fun to think about.

Then in verse 7, I want you to look at this phrase here, "*After a while, the wadi dried up.*" Have you ever really had the brook dry up in your life? Have you ever maybe had a financial reversal? Maybe it is a relationship in your life and the brook has dried up. Perhaps you have been demoted and the brook has dried up. Listen to the Bible in Psalm 37:25, "*I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*" If you find that your brook has dried up, take hope because God wants to take care of you. So, what do we do? Well, we do what Elijah did. We just trust God.

The first thing that happened to Elijah during his struggle is his brook dried up. Furthermore, Elijah's barrel was depleted. Look at verse 9, "*Get up, go to Zarephath that belongs to Sidon, and stay there. Look, I have commanded a woman who is a widow to provide for you.*" It is interesting. God is going to use this man, Elijah, to stand against the prophets of Baal. The first time, God says, "I'm going to provide for you via some ravens in a

ravine. Where there is no water, I'll make a brook. Where there is no bread, I'll have the ravens bring it." Now the second time He is going to send him to a place that is called "Zarephath." The first place God sent him to was "Cherith." That word actually means "to be cut off." So the first time God says to Elijah, "I want you to go and be 'cut off' from your people." The second time, He says, "I want you to go to Zarephath." That word means "a sweltering furnace," a refining fire. This is all in preparation for a pretty good conflict with the enemy. God says, "I want you to go and hide." I don't know if you have ever been asked to stand alone or you have ever been asked to go hide so you don't always have to be with the crowd and you don't always have to have people around you but go hide. Then after you hide, God is going to take him to the refiner's fire to "Zarephath." There He is going to have this woman who is going to take care of him.

I think it is significant as we have today some of you find yourself in a condition of being a widow. Here God is going to use a widow in a tremendous way. Here she is, this woman at Zarephath, and she is going to be preparing some wood for what she believes is the last supper. She does not have any more meals. She doesn't have anything else except to make for one last meal for her and her son. Elijah encounters her in verse 13. Then Elijah said to her, "*Don't be afraid.*" I think that is a wonderful lesson when we encounter God. Don't be afraid. Fear not. Here is Elijah saying to this woman, "First thing, go and make me a small loaf from it, from the little bit that you have left. Only make a small loaf from it and bring it out to me." Here she is, a widow providing for her son. She only has enough provision to make one last meal. She is stoking up the fire, and this prophet, this man of God, says, "Don't be afraid. By the way, bring me some of this bread first." That is very, very important, particularly if we're trying to teach Financial Peace in our church. We must understand that God always asks for His first. Notice what happens here. She is thinking, "If I bring you what little bit I have, there won't be enough for my son and for myself." Look in verse 14, "*For this is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'The flour jar will not become empty and the oil jug will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the surface of the land.'*" There is a drought in the land. God has sent His servant, His prophet to go hide, to be fed by the ravens, and then He sends Him to this place to be refined, and comes in contact with this woman. He speaks to the woman and says, "First of all, ma'am, bring me some of that bread." So what does she do? What would you do if you didn't have very much at all and you saw someone else that needed it? Who would you take care of? Notice what she does in verse 15, "*So she proceeded to do according to the word of Elijah. She and he and her household ate for many days.*" God has a way of providing. Many of you could give testimonies of how things today in your life are not how they once were. God has a way of meeting our needs according to His riches and His glory through Jesus Christ. This is what is happening to this lady.

In 1 Kings 17 verse 17 and following, you are going to see what happens. It is a transition in the story. God is refining Elijah, preparing Him for this big showdown, and after this the son of the woman became ill. "*His illness became very severe until no breath remained in him.*" Death happens. The Bible says, "*It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment.*" (Hebrews 9:27) Here, this woman's dear son is dead. How would you respond? Notice how she responded. It is interesting because I think a lot of us would do the same thing. "*She said to Elijah, 'Man of God, what do we have in common?'*" Now that is curious because they had just been sharing food for many days together. God had met her need when she was making her last bit of bread. So suddenly when her son dies, all bets are off, and she says, "*Man of God, what do we have in common?'*" What did she do? "*Have you come to remind me of my guilt and to kill my son?'*" What did she do? She blamed Elijah. What do we do? We blame God. When things go bad we never blame ourselves. Here she blamed the man of God. It's the same thing you would do. She blamed the preacher. After all, the church ought to be meeting MY needs. Then she blamed God. Unbelievable! God had just met her need. Here she starts blaming God, but Elijah said to her to take her son upstairs. Don't you find it interesting that he does not sit here and debate with her. He doesn't chastise her. Jesus didn't do it either. Jesus often just asked people questions. I will not try to talk you into something that the Holy Spirit can't quicken your heart to do. Ours is to be obedient. Elijah told her to take her son upstairs, so they took him upstairs. Look at what happened, "*So he took him from her arms, brought him up to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed.*" (1 Kings 17:19) He has quit breathing. He's probably dead. "*Then he cried out to the LORD.*" Who cried out to the Lord? Elijah. What is he doing? What would you call crying out to the Lord? Praying. Elijah begins to pray. Notice his prayer. I think it is significant. "*My LORD God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow I am staying with by killing her son?'*" This is an unbelievable picture. I want you to get the picture here. "*Then he stretched*

himself out over the boy three times.” The boy is lying down, dead. Elijah stretches himself over as if he is coming between the dead and the alive. He is becoming the mediator between the dead and the alive. A picture of Jesus—what Jesus does when our dead corpse is there and He lays out for us on the cross. It is a beautiful picture of what Christ has done for us on the cross. He prayed three times. There is a lot of significance to the number “3” here. *“He cried out to the LORD and said, “My LORD God, please let this boy's life return to him!”* Verse 22, *“So the LORD listened to Elijah's voice, and the boy's life returned to him.”*

You may say, “So he was resurrected.” Not so fast! Understand your words there. “Resurrection” means to come back to life and never die again. There is only one person who did that. What really happened is that he was resuscitated because the boy would die again later. He wasn’t resurrected, but he was resuscitated from the dead.

Verse 23, *“Then Elijah took the boy, brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. Elijah said, “Look, your son is alive.”* If you were in church last Sunday night, we talked about the prodigal. Isn’t that the same phrase: “My son who was dead is now alive!” It is that very same phrase here that he used. Verse 24, *“Then the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know you are a man of God and the LORD's word in your mouth is the truth.”*

I think we are at a great stopping point to see several things. Number one, there is a Baal out there—a sensual, sexual, hedonistic god that the whole world believes shows his face in the sun and in the rain. I do it too some, but people are kind of hooked on talking about the weather. Everyone has an angle on their hopes for the weather. The truth of the matter is that God, whether we find ourselves hiding in a brook with nothing to eat, God has a way of circumventing the natural course of nature and providing our needs. It may be that we are like that woman. We may be on our last leg, and we may need God to meet our needs. Maybe we are like that lady in that we are always blaming God when bad things happen, or maybe we want to blame someone else. What we really need to look to is that One who is comes in between us when we are dead in ourselves and a holy God and do what Elijah did which was just look to Jesus. He is our only hope. He is the only way of escape. The road God provides might be unreal, but God has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. So we see a man like Elijah. He is just like us.

Today Jesus wants to be between death and life. If you will come to Christ today, you can have the assurance of God’s word that you will have all of your needs met beginning with your need for salvation.