

Title: Don't Be Afraid: Trusting God in the Face of Scarcity and Death

Sermon Summary: Drawing from 1 Kings 16 and 17, this sermon contrasts the wickedness of King Ahab with the faithful obedience of the prophet Elijah, using their stories to call believers toward deeper trust in God. The pastor emphasizes that God allows difficulty, resistance, and even apparent scarcity in the lives of believers not to defeat them, but to enlarge their faith and draw them closer to him. Through the encounter between Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, the sermon illustrates that simple, sometimes uncomfortable obedience to God's voice produces miraculous provision. The central call is for believers to release fear, particularly the fear of death, and to rest in the finished work of Christ, whose resurrection stripped death of its power over those who believe.

Key Points:

- King Ahab is described as doing more evil in the eyes of God than any king before him, serving as a sobering reminder that each person's life tells a story, and believers should consider what God would say about what they "did more" of with their lives
- God does not always remove evil or hardship from around his people; sometimes resistance is what keeps believers spiritually strong, just as adversity keeps fish firm and healthy during long journeys
- Simple, faithful obedience to God's voice is more important than having the perfect words or approach; Elijah's awkward request of the widow illustrates that obedience does not always look smooth or comfortable
- Brokenness in the life of a believer is not meant to destroy but to enlarge the heart, creating more room for God and building greater faith and confidence in his character
- The widow of Zarephath's willingness to act on Elijah's word, even in desperate circumstances, resulted in supernatural provision that sustained her household through the entire drought
- Fear, especially the fear of death, loses its grip when believers genuinely understand what Christ accomplished through his death and resurrection; the sting of death has been removed for those who trust in him

- Communion serves as a tangible reminder that Christ has already handled death on behalf of believers, and is an invitation to renewed courage and settled faith

Scripture Reference:

- 1 Kings 16:29-33, which introduces Ahab's reign and his pattern of escalating evil before God
- 1 Kings 17:7-14, which recounts the drying up of the brook Cherith, God's instruction to Elijah to go to Zarephath, and Elijah's encounter with the widow and her declaration of near-total depletion before the promise of miraculous provision

Stories:

- The parable of the wheat and tares, in which Jesus teaches that good and evil grow together in the world until the final harvest, illustrating why God does not simply remove all evil from the lives of believers
- The rich man and Lazarus, referenced to illustrate the vast and unbridgeable chasm between good and evil, and between God and wickedness
- The account of fish being transported across the Atlantic, in which small sharks placed in the tank kept the fish swimming and preserved their texture, used as an illustration of how resistance and adversity strengthen believers rather than destroy them
- The biblical narratives of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace and Daniel in the lions den, cited as examples of God's presence in extreme trials even when deliverance does not look the way believers expect
- The account of Elijah being fed by ravens at the brook Cherith, referenced as background to his faith when he later spoke words of courage to the widow
- The encounter between Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, the central narrative of the sermon, in which a destitute woman with only enough flour and oil for one final meal is asked to feed the prophet first, and receives the promise that her supplies will not run out until the drought ends