

How to Thrive in the Famine

by Carter Conlon

God's mercy and faithfulness are always available, even in times of hardship and famine.

Duration: 51:14

Scripture: 1 Kings 17:8, Psalm 23:1, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:8-9

Topics: "Famine"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the church meeting human needs and not closing themselves off from the world. He uses the example of the four lepers in the Old Testament who went into the Syrian camp and found provision. The preacher encourages believers to open their eyes to human need and give out of the little they have, just as God has taught them. He shares personal experiences of seeing the power of giving and trusting in God's provision. The sermon also highlights the importance of focusing on true, pure, and positive things rather than getting caught up in worldly arguments.

Transcript

Good morning, Times Square Church. God bless you. You know, isn't it wonderful today to know that the joy that we feel in this house today, you don't have to leave it here when you leave.

You can have a living relationship with God. I want to speak to you from 1 Kings chapter 17, please, in the Old Testament. And if you don't have a Bible, perhaps you could lean over to the person beside you, and they might be kind enough to share it.

I want to speak this morning of a message called, How to Thrive in the Famine. How to Thrive in the Famine. Now, this is a message that I feel in my heart, you might want to red flag it and listen to it again in a year from now.

You're going to need to know these truths, you and I both. Now, Father, I thank you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. God, without your life in us, we have nothing.

And you're the only one that can make the Bible come alive and make it a living word in each of our hearts and give us the ability to embrace it in our minds and to see it as the highest form of living and truth. Lord, give us a love for your word that goes beyond just the love of the letter on the page, but actually a love of living what you say and trusting you for the strength to do it. Lord, I have nothing but what you choose to

give me.

I have no strength, but your strength. And I'm asking you to manifest your life through me today and give hope and give help to everybody who's come into this sanctuary. Let nobody leave here discouraged.

Father, I thank you for this in Jesus' name. 1 Kings chapter 17, beginning at verse 8, how to thrive in the famine. And the word of the Lord came to him, this a man called Elijah in the Old Testament, saying, arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there.

Behold, I've commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks.

And he called to her and said, fetch me, I pray thee a little water in a vessel that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her and said, bring me, I pray thee a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, as the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal and a barrel and a little oil and a cruise.

And behold, I'm gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. And Elijah said to her, fear not, go and do as thou hast said, but make me thereof a little cake first and bring it to me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.

And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah, and she and he and her house did eat many days and the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruise of oil fail according to the word of the Lord, which is spake by Elijah. Now this was a time of spiritual confrontation in the nation of Israel. Now the premise I'm speaking from this morning is based on the understanding that the writer of Hebrew says about Jesus Christ.

He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. He doesn't change the way he is, the way he deals with people, the way he deals with nations. You see it all throughout history.

You see it in biblical history. God will bless the people. If you don't know this, you can read it through the Old Testament and you'll see it.

He'll bless the people and he will lavish them as it is with his kindness and then they will suddenly forget him and they will turn to ways of living that are contrary to the word of God. He will then send hardship upon them to bring them back to himself. Now I want you to remember in the days ahead that hardship is mercy.

The core of it is mercy. The core of judgment is mercy. And thank God, it's better to be hungry and go to heaven than full and go to hell.

Thank God for his mercy. He will do whatever he has to do in this generation to get a hold of his people first, the people of his house, and secondarily the nation. In this time in history that we're reading about in the Old Testament, the Lord was shutting off the supply to get the attention of his own people and then subsequently the nation.

They lost sight of truth and they had become captivated by a false form of success and materialism. It ended up with a spiritual confrontation on a mountain in Israel called Mount Carmel where there were two altars built. The one altar is the altar where the majority of the people were of that time worshipping.

It was an altar of sensuality, an altar of success and prosperity, and all these other things that those who don't know God spend most of their time seeking after. Then there was a secondary altar that was built by one man called Elijah. And Elijah challenged the people and said, let the place where the fire of God comes down, let that be the true place of worship.

I fully believe with all my heart this confrontation is taking place again in our generation, in his house and among his people. Now the fire of God was a physical form of fire in that generation, but in our time it's the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It's this incredible indwelling of God, the strength of God that is given to those who make the choice to stand and worship at the right place.

And this is where we find ourselves again as a church age in our time. Now on the day when the confrontation finally came on Mount Carmel, Elijah said to Ahab, now Ahab was the king, so he's a representative of, in a sense, the type of government that the people had over them at that season. In 1 Kings 18, 17, he said, you and your father's house brought this trouble to the nation because you've forsaken the commandments of the Lord and you followed Balaam.

Now he was a fearless man. He's pointing right into the face of the king and said, because the king had accused him of troubling the nation. He said, no, I'm not troubling the nation.

You have troubled the nation. You and your father's, you've turned away from God. You've turned away from living the way God said to live.

You're no longer humble and you have turned to another form of worship called Balaam. Now Balaam was the Canaanite God. It was a farm God.

He was the God who the people thought gave increase to family and field to flocks and herds. It was a self-focused form of religion and it was completely laced throughout with sensuality. It brought the people into, in a sense, no moral moorings were in any part of this relationship or this religion.

The apostle Paul in first Timothy chapter six and verse five warned Timothy to withdraw from men that he considered bankrupt of truth, who taught their followers this concept that gain is godliness or that gain is an evidence, is the evidence of godliness. Now I'm not against God blessing his people, but I'm against the worship of blessing. I'm against the total focus of blessing that marginalizes the poor, that tells the poor man he's something of a second-class citizen in the house of God because his clothes and his lifestyle are not as fine as others around him.

No, gain is not a measure of godliness. I thank God for his provision. Without his provision, we couldn't do the work of God, but it is absolutely no evidence of godliness whatsoever.

Elijah said to the people in first Kings 18:21, when they were gathered at Mount Carmel, he said, how long will you halt between two opinions? Now the people knew the difference. They knew many of these people, the old Testament, they knew the law, they understood the character of God, but this other form of worship was also very attractive to them. It was like the man who trusts in God but spends a lot of time scratching lottery tickets in the corner store.

I trust God, I believe God, I know that he says he will provide if I seek first his kingdom, but on the off chance that I might win the mega million, I make not only make a weekly trip to church, I make a weekly trip to the corner store where I buy for a dollar whatever it is, this thing, and I stretch it hoping that I'm going to win. And Elijah said, how long will you stand between these two opinions? If God is God, worship him. In other words, go for it.

Believe him. Stand with him. Do what he says to do.

Now, the Lord gave Elijah an instruction because Elijah had to go through the same famine as everyone else did. And as a church age, we're going to have to go through the same days of hardship that everyone else is going to go through. I don't know how hard it's going to be, I just know it's going to be difficult for everybody.

That's something I feel in my heart, and I think it's being borne witness to almost every day around us. But here's what the Lord told him to do. In 1 Kings 17, verses 3 and 4, he said, You know, God's ways are not our ways.

His thoughts are not our thoughts. Imagine if you were in Elijah's position, go to this brook, camp out there, and he says, birds are going to come, and they're going to feed you. How many would rather go down to the store and scratch a lottery ticket? Now, it's significant because the Jordan River had a specific significance to the people of Israel.

I want to focus on just two aspects of it. It was at the Jordan River where the people of God under Joshua's leadership had passed through the impossible. The priests bearing the ark, which is the presence or the covenant of God, had gone into the water first.

Now, this was God saying, I'm going to bring you into a place of promise, and in that place, I'm going to provide, I'm going to protect, I'm going to be your provider, I'm going to be everything you need in this place. And to prove it to you, the initial evidence of that, may I say, was as the priests went into the water, the waters parted, and not only did they part, the ground became dry. As if it would be enough for God just to part the river, but not only did he part the river, he dried the ground that had been underwater for who knows how many hundreds or thousands of years.

The people of God passed through the impossible on dry ground according to the promises of the inheritance that God had given them. Camp out at that place, the Lord told Elijah, that place of the history of the faithfulness of God, not only in the scriptures, but in your life. Think about how faithful God has been.

Think about where he's brought you from. Think about the prison doors he opened, the sight he gave to your eyes, the healing he brought into your heart, the hope into your home, the direction he gave to your family. Think about the fact, yes, you've had hard days, but everybody here looks to be fairly well fed to me today.

Forgive me if I'm not seeing somebody I should be seeing. You appear to be well clothed. And the Lord has kept us.

He's been faithful to us. Peter said in 2 Peter 1, 4, we're given exceeding great and precious promises. And through these promises, we escaped the corruption that is in the world around us.

He says in chapter 1 verse 5 again of 2 Peter, we are kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. We're kept by the power of God. Not only did he bring us out, he brought us in.

And as the people of God, he's going to keep us. We may have to go through a season like Elijah did where the rain has stopped. The produce of the nation seems to have dried up.

The carpet of false security is ripped out from under the feet of almost all people. But God will always have a people. He will always show himself faithful.

Paul says in Philippians chapter 4 verses 8 and 9, finally, brethren, he said, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things which you both learned and received and heard and seen in me do and the God of peace shall be with you. Think on these things.

Notice it doesn't say here, go to Fox, CNN, MSNBC, ABC, read what they say and think on these things. No, as the people of God, we've got to go where God says we got to camp by the river Jordan. We've got to look at the faithfulness of God.

We've got to get away from all the arguments that have no purpose, but to literally suck the strength and life right out of your heart. We've got to get away from these things. I'm not saying you become a hermit and don't once in a while pick up the newspaper, but the wonderful thing about the news is you can opt out for a month, opt back in and nothing has changed.

Everybody's still saying the same thing. You don't have to worry about all the political debates. They'll be saying the same things exactly one year from now.

Nothing will change. Don't have to worry about it. Jordan, in the gospel of Mark chapter one, please, if you'll turn there with me, Jordan is significant because I want you to remember that Jordan is the river where Jesus Christ was baptized by John the Baptist.

In Mark chapter one and verse nine, it says, it came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized of John in Jordan. Jordan is the place where Jesus publicly declared that he chose to live for the purpose of God. The purpose that his father had ordained for his life.

Go back to that place. Go to Jordan. Make a public declaration that in spite of what the days may hold ahead of me, I am going to live for the purpose of God for my life.

And the purpose of God will always involve people. It will always move you and I towards human need. The impoverished, the addicted, the imprisoned, the hopeless, the confused, those that even oppose their own salvation.

The purpose of God will always move us in the compassion of God to people because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. When he made this public declaration, verse 11 and 10 tells us, and coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened and the spirit like a dove descending upon him and there came a voice from heaven saying, thou art my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. In this place of declaration, Jordan, Jesus was given power and God openly declared him to be a son in whom he was well pleased.

When you and I make this declaration, when we stand publicly and saying I'm going to live for God the rest of my days, and it's not a thing that we're doing, we're not doing it just for the sake of church, we're doing it because it is a commitment we're making before God for the rest of our days. The immediate thing that begins to happen is power comes into your life. You tap into a power source that's got nothing to do with humanness, it has everything to do with God.

And you suddenly have a sense of well-being come into your heart. You're my son, you're my daughter in whom I am well pleased. And immediately, verse 12, the spirit drove him into the wilderness and he was there in the wilderness 40 days tempted of Satan and was with the wild beasts and the angels ministered to him.

Immediately after this public declaration, this open heaven, the sense of well-being, he was taken into the wilderness and he was given power to overcome the wilderness. If you want power to overcome the wilderness, I'm telling you now stand for God. Ask God for the power that only he can give to do the work that he has called you to do.

And Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days. He fasted 40 days, there was no food came to him. He had to stand against difficulty, he had to stand against trial, temptation, everything that hell could throw against him was thrown against him.

But he was given the power of God to overcome the wilderness. And in that place, angels ministered unto him. And when he came out of the wilderness, he came out of it for you and he came out of it for me.

And I thank God for that with all of my heart today. Now, 1 Kings 17, again, the Lord told Elijah, he said, it shall be when you drink of the brook, I've commanded the ravens to feed you. Drink of this brook and you'll be supernaturally fed there by the power of God.

Drink of this Jordan, drink of this brook near Jordan, drink of this water, drink of this understanding that God will give us the power to stand if we are doing his work in the days that are ahead of us. And in verse 7, it says, it came to pass after a while that the brook dried up because there'd been no rain in the land. There's a point, you know, as a church, we can more or less camp around the promises of God, but he won't leave us there because there's a work that needs to be done in the earth.

And suddenly, I think Elijah may have gotten used to this. I mean, it was in his heart. He might've thought, this is just awesome.

I mean, the rain has stopped and God is preparing the nation to turn back to him. And this beautiful water is here every day. It's so soothing.

It's so comforting to me. And I don't even have to cook. I mean, these birds just suddenly appear and suddenly I've got roast rabbit and I've got things.

All this stuff is just all around me. This is an awesome, boy, God left me here to ride out the storm. This is amazing.

I'm going to go right from here, right to Mount Carmel. And then suddenly the brook starts to narrow. Suddenly troubling starts to come.

And Elijah is now forced to ask God, say, Lord, this season, this time seems to be drying up. What are you speaking to me? And then the Lord gives him another incredible direction. He said, arise, go to Zarephath and live there.

I've commanded a widow woman to sustain you. Now, the natural question is how will this widow sustain anything? She can barely help herself. When he gets there, she says to him, as the Lord thy God lives, I don't have a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, a little oil in a cruise.

And he says, behold, she said, behold, I'm gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. That's quite a testimony. Now in Elijah's mind, he might've been thinking, how in the world is this woman going to provide for me? She doesn't even have enough for herself.

I mean, in her own mind, she has a day left to live. Lord, are you sure? Is this part of your divine plan? I mean, aren't there people left in Israel that have something left in their cupboard? And how is it that you've commanded her to feed me? She doesn't even seem to be aware of it. Did you notice that in the scripture? The Lord says, I have commanded her to sustain you.

When he gets there, she's not even aware of it. And so how was this command given? Meditated on this for quite a while to say, well, she's not aware of it. So how has God commanded her to do this? And I think it's, it's simply this.

I have put it in her heart to listen to you. There's a day coming, my brother, my sister, when people are not listening now are going to listen. People are not interested in what you have to say are suddenly going to be interested in everything that God's put in your heart.

I've commanded her to sustain you. Now, now how does this listening in this widow's heart sustain the testimony of God, which is in Elijah? Now, firstly, in Isaiah, the Lord says of this woman, he says, a bruised reed shall he not break and a smoking flax shall he not quench. In other words, God says, I will not let those who know and love me go down.

I will not, even though they're, you know, she's part of this, this whole system that has been worshipping prosperity. And now she's come to the point where she doesn't have enough for a day. Her whole testimony of God and being part of the daughters of Israel, is I'm going to go out and get two sticks.

I'm going to eat what I have left. And I'm going, me and my son are going to die. That's her testimony.

She is a bruised reed or she's a candle. It's almost gone out. There's just a little flicker left, but God says, I will not break a bruised reed and I will not let a flickering candle go out.

And the last part of that verse, he says, I will, he will bring forth judgment unto truth. And here's the way I see this verse. Let me say it this way in judgment, that which is truth will become known again.

No, I won't let my church go out. I won't let the widows go out. I won't let those who have only a spark left of seeking me and knowing me.

They've sat in a place they shouldn't have sat. They've listened to things they shouldn't have listened to, but I will not let them go out. This is my church.

This is my bride. I'm going to reach out to them. And I'm going to do it through a people called the church of Jesus Christ.

Thank God for his mercy. Let me read to you what truth will become known again in our generation. Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry? Think of Elijah now going to this widow.

You bring the poor that are cast out to your house. You see the naked, you cover him and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh. Then your light will break forth as the morning.

Your health will spring forth speedily. Your righteousness will go before you and the glory of the Lord will be your rearward, which means we'll just literally gather around you and scoop you up and hold you in the hand of God. Then you will call, the Lord will answer.

You'll cry and you shall say, here I am. If you take away from you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, that means just looking to blame and empty talk. And if you draw out your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light will rise in obscurity and even your darkness will be just like the noon day.

And the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought and make fat your bones. And you'll be like a watered garden and like a spring of water whose waters fail not. And they that be of these shall build the old waste places and raise up the foundation again of many generations.

And you'll be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. These things, in other words, going to the widow in a time of famine will be what sustains you. And you will be the hands I used to sustain her.

You will actually sustain each other. Those who know God, those who have truth, those who are willing to obey God, going to those who are losing heart, those who find themselves in difficulty and with very little provision left, and being the extended hand of God's mercy, the Lord says that will be your provision. The church of Jesus Christ in this coming time must move to meet human need like we never have before.

We must not close our eyes. We must not close ourselves off by some river somewhere. We must not just sit.

Remember in the Old Testament, there were four lepers that went into the Syrian camp as they surrounded the people of God. And the Lord turned up the volume and made it sound like an approaching army. The Syrian army fled and they went into the camp and there was food and there was clothing and there was provision and they wallowed in it for a season.

And then suddenly they came to themselves and said, we don't do well. We have all this supply. We've stumbled on the supply and yet people are starving to death in the city.

We don't do well. And so they came back to the city and brought this provision of God back into the city with them. In similar measure, those of us who understand the word of God and know how the kingdom of God works and are willing to believe for the supernatural, are willing to reach out even in our own need and not close ourselves off to human suffering around us.

This will be what sustains us in the coming days and will be what sustains the hand of the widow. And first Kings 17, again in verse 13, and it says, Elijah said to her, fear not go and do as thou has said, but make me thereof a little cake first and bring it to me and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste and neither shall the cruise of oil fail until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.

And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah and she and he and her house did eat many days and the barrel of meal wasted not neither did the cruise of oil fail according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Elijah. When I first read that years ago, it seemed almost somewhat obnoxious to me that this man of God comes to this widow and says, no, make a meal for me first and then for yourself and for your son. But there's a principle in this.

The Lord was telling Elijah, teach her also to give to the hungry stranger and I will become her constant source of supply. Teach her what I have taught you as you give to her, teach her to give to others. It's that simple.

Teach her to open her eyes to human need as the stranger passes by with nothing to eat and teach her to give out of the little that she has. That's how the kingdom of God works. Simply said, if all you have left is enough to make a sandwich, a peanut butter sandwich, cut it in two and give half to the kid going to school across the hallway that has no lunch.

It's that simple. It isn't complicated. It never has been.

It's always been simple. And the Lord says, if you do these things in my name, you're going to find the supply will never stop. And folks, we're going to have to live this again.

Many here today, we're going to have to live these moments again in the future. We're going to have to trust God for provision. We're going to have to believe as we have camped by that river and we've started to understand the way the kingdom of God works.

And we've started to let him show us daily how he's able to provide. It will take us into a place that's deeper than this. There's a season where we will have to move as a body.

I anticipate honestly, feeding a lot of people in this city as a church. I envision carts on the sidewalk around us making sandwiches, hot dogs, I don't know what, but feeding a lot of people. But I also see you and I doing the same thing.

We cannot just simply draw back and hoard. We have to have open hands now. And the Lord says, this will be your strength.

This will be what sustains you. Going to the widow will keep you. Going to those that have nothing will be your strength and it will be your supply and it will be her supply.

It will be theirs. I'm telling you, we're going to experience some fellowship that's going to be sweeter than anything we've ever known. Now there are people today that you have to begin this journey and you must begin it now.

And here's how you start the journey. Camp by the river of trusting God to get you through the impossible place that you're in today. I know I'm, this is New York city and I know there are people here that are in impossible places.

You don't know how you're going to get through. You don't know. You don't know how it's going to happen, but this is a great opportunity for you to find out about the faithfulness of God, to start to meditate and think on the promises of God, to start seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and let him begin to prove himself to you.

This is a place where your faith can begin to be built, but you need to camp by the river of trusting God to get you through your present situation. Let's not worry about the future. There's enough today to focus on.

There's other people who need to make this public declaration, just like Jesus did at Jordan, that you're choosing to live for the purpose that God has ordained for your life. You see, Baalism was essentially taking Jesus or taking God of that time and adding God to a person's own pursuits, using God to make me a better executive, using God to make me a finer person. Now some of these things will happen, but that was the exclusive use of the name of God.

It's Baalism. It's the God of increase. It's the God of virility.

It's the God of self-promotion. It's the God of me. But Jesus was so contrary to this, as was Elijah when he went to the river Jordan.

He had all power. He had all authority. He had a mind that obviously would make the rest of us look like imbeciles, but yet with all of this resident within him, he went down into the waters of humility and come up out of that water and said, I live not for myself, but for the will of my father.

And the will of his father was people, you and me. Thank God he came to us in our poverty with his strength. Thank God he didn't choose to use what he had for himself, or there would have been no Calvary, no cross, no redemption, no forgiveness, no joy in this house today, no purpose to live, no hope for tomorrow.

There's others today who need to ask God for the courage to give to others, even out of your own need. Remember the time an associate pastor came to me, and some of you know the story, he had a, his car blew up, his motor blew up in his car, and he came into my office. This is back in Canada, and he sat across the desk from me, and he said, I don't know what I'm going to do.

I don't even know how I'm going to get out to buy groceries or to take my family somewhere to come to church. And I don't have any savings, and I don't have a car. And so I said, well, let's pray.

So we bowed together, I started to pray. Now I had \$6,000 in the bank at that time. It was my slush fund in case the ministry thing just didn't work out for me.

And as I began to pray, this voice in the back of my head said, you hypocrite, stop praying. You know what, you have what this man needs to help him. Now I had to fight through, I'm going to be honest, I had to fight through it.

I tried to keep praying, but it was like my mouth was filled with molasses, and it got thicker the more I tried to pray. It's like the words wouldn't come out because it was just such abject hypocrisy. This was my brother in Christ.

This was a godly man. And I had, but in my mind I'm fighting. I said, but God, it's all I have.

What about my kid's teeth? What if my kid's teeth get crooked? My mother was always really big on teeth and straight teeth. And so I kind of imbibed some of that. And I said, what about my kid's teeth? And what about my car? I don't have a new car.

My car is kind of old. What if it goes? And so finally the Lord just got a hold of me, and I went to the bank. And I'm telling you, the devil went to the bank with me too.

It was right over my shoulder. What about your kid's teeth? I took out the money I had in the bank and I gave it to him. Now it was in faith.

I'd like to be able to say that I leapt for joy when I put it in his hand, but I didn't. I just did it because I knew the word of God said to do that. Then I left for Eastern Canada and came home and my house burned down while I was gone.

But later on, I was driving this old car when I bought my friend a new car. And now 6,000 doesn't sound like much, but Hyundai had just come on the market and they were roughly around that amount of money at that time. And I remember my old car just burned out.

And I remember thinking, well, look, I've obeyed you. Lord, I just don't know what else to say. I've obeyed you.

I'm seeking first your kingdom. I'm not going to ask anybody. I'm not going to ask anybody to pray for my need.

Nothing. I'm just going to just leave it. And I was in the church.

I was up on a scaffold. We were painting the dome of the church at that time. We were restoring an old church.

And somebody said, somebody's called you from the city. It's an emergency. So I came down from the scaffold.

I went into my office and I said, hello. And he said, is this Pastor Carter Conlon? And I said, yes. And he said, well, I'm so-and-so from such and such a car dealership.

And he said, there's a gentleman came in this morning. He bought a brand new car. He registered it in your name.

He said, all you have to do is come in and sign for it and drive it away. I said, what was the man's name? He says, I don't know. He wouldn't tell us his name.

Praise God. Now, now I'm not telling you today, don't misunderstand me, that if you give somebody \$6,000, you're going to get a new car. There are other people not too far from here that will tell you that, but I'm not telling you that.

But I am telling you that if you will reach out, even out of your own need, and just do the bit that you are able to do, that God will feed you. God will supply for you. He will be your source.

He will be your strength, and it will come like ravens in a sense. There'll be things like I told you that will begin to happen. And by the way, after my house burned down, the Lord just did the miraculous, the story just spread everywhere, all throughout the community and even farther than the community.

And suddenly people began responding. Churches took offerings. People, I have lived this folks.

I've seen this. I remember coming back home and I had no money and I had lost my home. I'd given my money away.

And the Lord told me after it was all over, I had a new home after it was over, I had another car. And the Lord told me, he said, I needed to show you that I can take it all away and I can give it all back. It all is in my hands.

So I'm strongly suggesting to you that you go to the widow. This will be our strength. This will be our provision.

This will be where God is going to manifest himself as God, our provider. This is where we're going to know. I'm not telling anybody here today to empty your bank account and run out in the street and give it to the first person you see, but just be aware of human need.

Be aware of what goes on around you and obey those inner promptings. It's not always easy, but obey those inner promptings of the Holy Spirit and be kind to other people. We also need to have the humility to receive when others would help us.

You know, as a young Christian, I had no problem giving, but I had a real problem receiving. It's a pride issue in the heart. And we have to pray, God, give us the humility to receive when others would reach out to help us.

Elijah had to have humility to go to a widow and say, make a meal for me first. He had to be a broken man and a humble man. He could not have been religiously arrogant or proud to be able to say those words.

And so I want to give an altar call this morning for those who have to trust God for an impossible place, to those who want to publicly declare, I'm going to live for God's purpose for my life, to those who need courage to give to others. It's not been easy, but even in the book of Malachi, the Lord says, I'll paraphrase it, but you bring what you should to the work of God. And he says, I'll open the windows of heaven to you and I'll bless you.

And we need others just simply need humility to receive. Kind words, love. You might be the person with the resources to feed, but you might need to be fed sometime in the future.

Ultimately, it's all about other people. Father, thank you. Lord, I don't think I could have said it more clearly.

I just thank you for your word being true. I remember the day of going out for a jog and I had no clothes for my children. And I said to you, Lord, I have sought first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

And you said all things would be added unto me. Lord, I stand here today to thank you because your word is true. It's always been true.

And not only have you provided, you have blessed me abundantly. But oh God, I'm asking you for the grace to give, the grace to be kind, the grace to see, the grace to reach out, the grace to help. Father, I thank you with all my heart.

Would you bless this church by giving us a heart for the poor? Would you bless us, God, by giving us open hands in a season where everybody is going to be pulling back? Would you help us to bless New York City in a profound way? Lord, whatever flows in, give us the grace to let it flow out. Help us, God, to feed kids in school. Help us to be kind to our neighbors.

Help us, Lord Jesus Christ, to take a stand for what we know is right and true. And you'll keep us in time of famine. I thank you for it in Jesus' mighty name.

We're going to stand. And as we do, if this applies to you, you'd like to respond. This altar is open.

And if you'd just come forward, we'll pray together. And we're going to believe God for the miraculous. I love you, love you, love you, Jesus.

Praise your holy name. How many at this altar are in an impossible place right now? Could you just lift up your hand? Are you willing to believe God? See, once He takes you through this, if you're willing to let it become a resource of faith in you, say, God, you can do the impossible. See, that's what this original camping by this brook was all about, is for God to teach this prophet he's a God of the impossible, so that he could go to the widow and follow the instruction and say, you give to God and God will give back to us and keep us and sustain us.

So if you're willing to learn and to let that become part of your character, I'm gonna pray for you right now. Father, I thank you, Lord. God, I have known impossible places in my own life where I didn't know how I was gonna get through.

And I remember praying, I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to get through this. But God, you've always been faithful.

You have never failed me, not one time. I can't lay a single accusation at your throne. You've always been faithful, Lord.

You've always given strength. You've always shown me the way through. You've always given me the power to go on.

Lord, when there were days that I didn't think I could go another day, Lord, you just took my hand and led me through the door into another day. Lord, you've always been there and you've always been faithful. And I thank you, it's built a bank of faith in my heart to trust you.

And now, Lord, I'm asking God for your people in this sanctuary who are going into impossible places. Take us through, Lord, these places. Build a resource of trust in our heart that in the coming days, we can go to the widow, we can go to the poor, we can go to the fearful.

And with words of faith, just say, do what I tell you and God will provide for you. God will keep all of us safe in his hand. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, God. Lord, we're willing to declare you faithful today. You have to be faithful.

That's who you are. You can't be anything else but faithful. You are the provider, the defender.

You are everything you say you are in the word of God. Now, Lord, give us the power to get through these places. Give us the power as a church, build faith in our hearts now that we can face these days ahead of us, Lord, with the strength of God and the compassion of our Christ alive within us.

Help us to determine in our hearts that we're gonna live for Christ the rest of our days. My God, may we finish this race together. May we finish it working the work of God.

May we finish it with our hands raised and a song of faith in our hearts, oh God. We ask you for the privilege of finishing this race with the widow beside us and the orphan and the poor and the distressed and the confused, having found you a savior, having found you as healer and deliverer. My God, reach out, Lord, in this city.

Let there be a shout of glory in New York City, a shout of glory in every church, every home. My God, every place where you are, let there be a shout of glory. God is our provider.

God is our strength. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, a word of caution. After hearing a message like this, be led of the spirit, not just, you know, you're riding a high of emotion right now, but the beggars out there, they come in the back and they listen to my messages, okay? And as you head to the parking lot, they're gonna be repeating my words. Now, some of these people make a fortune.

I'm not kidding you. They've got a trapline here. So be led of the spirit.

I'm not saying you don't put a dollar in a cup, but be led of the spirit, not of human emotion. Don't feel the necessity to go and empty your bank account. Praise God.

Praise God. Father, thank you for this word today. Thank you for the service today, the worship, your presence in the house and the gladness that your presence always puts into our hearts.

We never leave your presence sad or cast down or without hope. Where you are, there's life, there's freedom, there's joy. God, we wanna give you praise.

We wanna give you thanks in Jesus' mighty name. Let's do as we always do. Give God a shout of glory in this house.

Hallelujah. Praise God. Praise God.

You can do better than that.

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