

When You Would Rather Die Than Live

by Carter Conlon

Carter Conlon's sermon emphasizes God's desire to bring hope and purpose to those feeling overwhelmed by despair, using the story of Elijah as a powerful example of transformation through faith.

Duration: 31:26

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:18, Proverbs 18:24, Jeremiah 1:5, Matthew 11:28, Romans 3:23, Hebrews 10:25, James 4:8

Topics: "Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of surrendering to God and leaving behind our old ways. He encourages the audience to recognize that without God, they are limited and fall short of His glory. However, by allowing God to take over, they can receive the strength and guidance needed to fulfill their purpose and have a profound influence on others. The preacher also addresses the loneliness that many people feel, particularly in a bustling city like New York, and offers the message of hope and love that comes from a relationship with God.

Transcript

I want to speak tonight, just for a few moments. The Lord put a message on my heart. I want to speak to somebody who would rather die than live.

Now, you're not suicidal, but there's a sorrow that's gotten so deep into your heart that even being in the house of God tonight, you'd rather, if anybody did, that God take your life. If life's going to go on the way it's been going, if disappointment is going to pile on top of disappointment, you're only here tonight because you'd just like to get right with God and then perhaps just leave this earth. That would be your preference.

Not that you're considering, and it's a specific word that God's given me tonight for somebody. It's not that you're considering taking your own life. That's not in your thinking.

You're just so despairing in your heart that you'd rather die than live. Let's pray together. Father, I just thank you, God.

Lord, you have sent a word for someone tonight. I pray, God, give me the grace to be a key to unlock this prison, to be a healing oil, to offer help in this time of despair. Oh, Jesus, the Son of God, for the honor of your name, Lord, touch those that you've destined to touch for eternity tonight.

God, don't let anybody leave this sanctuary unchanged. Don't let anybody leave lost. Don't let the despairing person walk out the door the way they've come in.

Do the miraculous tonight. That's what you do. That's who you are.

Save and deliver and heal. I thank you for it in Jesus' name. Now, you don't need to turn there.

I'm just going to tell you this story. In the Old Testament, in the book of 1 Kings, chapter 19, there was a man called Elijah. He was a good man, a decent man.

He wanted to do good. He wanted to go out into this world, and he wanted to make a difference, just like you do, or in some cases, like you did. You were born into a specific family.

You were the victim or the receiver of either tragedy or blessing, as we've heard tonight. In both cases, there's some decent homes and some homes that were not so good. And you went out, and you said, I'm not going to be the same as others were.

I want my life to count for something. And you did have a measure of success. You headed out, and you had some internal zeal to achieve.

We all do when we're young, and survive and strive. And you wanted to be different. Now, we heard so many stories in this pulpit on Sunday night.

This is a generation that seemed to have been abandoned by their fathers. Would you agree with me? I thank God that Malachi the prophet says the Lord is going to turn in the last days the fathers back to the children, and the children to their father. I believe he's talking about the church.

Something is going to happen in the church. But you were abandoned, or you were the victim of something. And you headed out, and you said, I'm not going to be like they were.

I'm not going to be like my father was, my mother was, or my guardian, whoever it was in your life. I'm going to be different. I'm going to be maybe noble.

I'm going to be committed. My life is going to count for something. I'm not going to end up a hopeless drunk on a street corner.

I'm not going to be an abuser. I'm not going to be violent. I'm not going to steal for a living, and numerous other things that are probably too deep and too far spread to touch the depth of it tonight.

And Elijah was this kind of a man. And he really wanted to do something good. And he really wanted to do it for God.

And he had really a pure passion in his heart. But he just ran out of gas at some point in his life, like all of us do. It was a season, a time where he just, his resources ran out.

He just had no more strength. He burned out in his attempt to do something that he felt was right. And I guess if you've read the story, of course it was right.

And the Scripture says he sat down a day's journey into the wilderness. He'd had enough. He was fed up.

He was finished. And I know there's people here tonight, you've just had enough of New York City. Everyone else is landing here at LaGuardia and they're thinking, well this is just God's gift to the earth, New York City.

And you've been here long enough now to know, you know, they arrive with their suitcases and they're all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and so I'll see you in six months from now, see what you look like after this. You know what this city can do to people. And he took a journey, a day's journey into the wilderness.

And he sat under a juniper tree and he requested for himself that he might die. And he said, it's enough now, Lord, take away my life. I'm not better than my father's.

Now the juniper tree, there are different types in the Scripture, but one type of juniper tree, the roots of it are poisonous. And he was sitting in a place that it was a tree but had a poisonous roots. It was a form of shelter, a form of solace.

I think of those who are sitting in the shadow of despair right now. Remember he said, I'm not better than my father's. You know, you're headed out to be different, but you're not different.

And you now know it. You didn't want to yell at your kids, but now you're worse than your father was. You didn't want to be a person who walked out and abandoned others in relationships, but you find yourself doing the same thing.

You know the ravages of alcohol, but you find yourself going into the same clubs and places and doing the same things. And you know you're on the same downward spiral as those who came before you. You didn't want to do this.

You wanted your life to amount to something else. And yet you find that you've lost the resource. You've lost the strength.

You ran out of gas. You had good intentions, but it can only take you so far. As Paul says in the New Testament, there's an inner corruption.

I know what to do, but I don't know how to do it. I know what I should be, but how do I get there? And so he finally sits down under this tree of despair. He asks God to take his life.

He's not going to take his own life and neither are you. But he says, God, you made me. Take me out.

I don't want to be here anymore. I don't want to live in this world. I'm no better than those that came before me.

I wanted to be different. In Elijah's case, maybe he saw the cowardice of some previous prophets. And he didn't want to be that way.

But then he ended up running himself. And somehow he got it in his heart and in his head that he was no better. And the despair.

And I think there's people here tonight. I'd venture, I guess there's 100 people here tonight sitting under a tree of despair right now. Sorrow.

Not suicide. Sorrow. That just makes life not worth living anymore.

And he became lonely in his situation. He said, I've been jealous for the Lord God. And he says, and I'm the only one left.

Loneliness. It spiraled him down into a wrong worldview. You can get to, isn't it amazing? New York City, I think it's 17 million people in the greater New York area.

It can be one of the loneliest places in the world. You ever notice how lonely people are? They put headphones on that are so loud you can hear it across the street on Broadway. Really trying to drive out the loneliness.

Trying to drive out the fact that there's nobody around. Nobody cares. I'm all alone.

I know there's people here tonight. You feel that there's nobody in this world that cares about you. Nobody knows where you're sitting.

Nobody, and even if they knew, they wouldn't care. Nobody cares. You're all alone in your struggle.

And that's where Elijah was. Lonely. And he says, I would rather God that you took my life than all the vengeful, angry people around me.

He said, I'm the only one left and they're trying to kill me. And so instead of letting them kill me, God, would you mind killing me? That's really what he's saying. I'd rather God you took my life.

Maybe I'd stand a better chance if it was you that took it, Lord, and not them. And so, you know, God was going to take his life, but not in the way he imagined. And so he sat on a mountaintop, and I think he expected God to kill him at that point.

He felt like such a failure, and he felt like, well, perhaps this is the one prayer that God will still answer. And suddenly, a violent wind comes and it breaks. In Scripture, it broke the mountains in front of him and split huge rocks into the incredible power in the wind.

But then the Scripture says, but God was not in the wind. And then an earthquake came. And you can just imagine how massive that earthquake must have been.

And it's almost as if whatever was left standing probably shook and fell at the same time. And then after the earthquake, a fire came. And if it's God that sends the fire, the Scripture tells us that God is a consuming fire.

Probably just dissolving what's ever left from the wind and from the earthquake is being dissolved by the fire of God. But it says God was not in the wind, he was not in the earthquake, and he was not in the fire. In other words, God says, I could take your life.

I have the power to take your life. But God was not in it, because it's never God's will to take your life. Not in the way that you think.

And then after all this was done, a small, still voice came to him. A tender voice. Compassionate voice.

A caring voice. Elijah, what are you doing here? I didn't create you for this. I didn't touch your life.

I didn't let you come out of your mother's womb. I didn't call you by name before you were born for this. Do you understand, gentlemen that are here tonight, young ladies that are here? Do you understand that God

didn't create you to live in loneliness and despair? With no hope and no future.

With the wrong view of life and the wrong view even of yourself when you look into the mirror. Do you realize tonight that you weren't created for that? You're created for something much greater than that. And even though you would destroy yourself, and somehow you think that God should destroy you, and He shows you clearly He could if He wanted to, yet He doesn't want to.

That's why God came to the earth 2,000 years ago. That's why God became a man called Jesus. Walked through this world and went to a cross to pay the price for your sin.

Because He passionately loves you and wants you back to Himself again. He was willing to take upon Himself all the wrong that you've done. All the failures of your life.

All the ruined attempts to be something other than what you're natural, what you are without God. He was willing to take all of that on Himself. And then He pleads with you and calls you.

Remember you heard tonight in these testimonies, you remember Marcia said, I suddenly heard a voice? Remember the young lady that spoke at the end said, and suddenly a voice came to me? Do you know that's the same voice that came to Elijah? What are you doing here Elijah? I have something much better for you than this. And where you are has fallen far short of the glory of God. And where you are is as far as you can go without God.

But now will you let God take over? Will you let me do what only God is able to do? And the scripture tells us the Lord called him and said, now I want you to go down. He said, I've got a purpose for your life. Now Elijah was about to anoint kings.

He was about to appoint people. He was going to really have an influence for good over other people's lives. And that's what the Lord says to you tonight.

You think you have no purpose. You think you have no future. You think it's all gone, it's all fallen through your fingers.

But if you will let me touch your life, I will do something in you so profound that it will have an influence for good over other people for the rest of your life. You'll find the reason for life. You'll find the reason why you were created.

The reason for living. If you will let me come and forgive your sin. If you will acknowledge you need a savior.

Invite me into your life. I will come, the Lord says to you. I will cleanse you.

I will give you a new life, a new mind and a new heart. And your life will begin to be a life that has influence over other people. Like you heard tonight, this one young lady at the end.

She said this lady, this friend would come into work and she was always happy whether it was rainy or whether it was snowing. She was given the power of God to be an influence for good in other people's lives. What she could not do in herself, God said, if you'll let me, I will do it in you and I will do it through you.

And then he gave him a new understanding. He said to him, you're not the only one. There are 7000 others that have not meant their name to the gods as it is into the ways of this generation.

You're not alone. You'll find out as you come to Christ, you're not alone. You thought you were alone.

You thought there was nobody around who cared, but you'll find out there's many others. That have come through the same waters that you've come through. They're willing to be a brother and a sister to you.

And then he said to Elijah, I've anointed a friend for you, a new friend that you've never had before. Now, first of all, Jesus says to you, I will be a friend to you that sticks closer than a brother. You can leave here tonight with a friend like you've never had in your entire lifetime.

Jesus says, if you open the door to your heart, I will come in. I will sit down with you and I will sup with you. That means we'll sit down at the table.

My father and I will come into your life. We'll open to you this banquet of life that is yours in the word of God, by the power of God. All through faith in God and through the goodness of God.

And I'll become a friend to you. You will not walk out of here alone tonight. You'll not walk out of here in despair.

You'll not walk out of this church in loneliness. You'll walk out with a new friend that will never leave you and never forsake you. There will be there in the good days and be there in the bad days.

Be there when you think you've got it all together and be there when you think you've lost it all. Not a fair weather friend, but a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Thanks be to God for the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God for the hope that's in Christ. Thanks be to God for the life that is in Christ. Christ himself will walk with you.

Christ himself will give you an understanding of why you were born. What your life is all about. What you were created for.

You were created according to the scriptures for a divine purpose. That God ordained for your life. You are not a fluke of nature.

You're not just born out of bad circumstance. God saw you, the scripture says, in the womb before you were born. And allowed you to be born and called you by name for a specific person.

And reason rather, whether or not your parents were married, God knew. And allowed you to be born. Just like this lady told us tonight about this beautiful girl that the Lord gave her.

And she's raising her now for the Lord. You'll have a new friend, but you've got to open your heart to this friend. You've got to open your heart.

He's a gentleman, you know. To the last church in the Bible, he says, I stand at the door and knock. He has the right.

Remember with Elijah? He could blow the door open. He could burn it open. He could shake it open.

But instead he stands at the door with a tender knock. And waits. For you and I. Oh, the incredible mercy of God.

And the humility of God. When you think of what he could do. And yet he just comes tonight and gently, tenderly, lovingly knocks at the door of your heart.

And says, won't you open your life to me? Won't you let me come in and forgive your sin? Won't you let me change you from the inside out. And make you into the person that I had desired you to be from the moment you were formed. In your mother's womb.

And then the scripture tells us that we'll have a new friend called the church. The church is big. There's a lot of people in the church.

But you'll have new friends. But you have to open your heart to those friendships. Proverbs says, a person will have friends must show themselves friendly.

But when you open your heart, you're going to find out there's 7,000 more. Actually 10,000 or so in this church. That have not bent their knee to the gods of this age.

That are willing to walk with you. And you don't have to walk alone anymore. You can get involved.

You can go to prayer meetings. You can go to mission trips. You can clean the toilets.

You can do whatever you want to do. There's all kinds of people there in these ministries. That are willing to be your friend.

You'll find. And it doesn't mean they have to look like you. Or they don't have to work in the same place as you.

You'll find in ministries throughout this church. I'm talking any ministry in this church. You've got people from every walk of life in there.

And it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter the income level. It doesn't matter what country you've come from.

It doesn't matter. Because we are part of the body of Jesus Christ. There is a reason to live.

That's the whole purpose of why you're even here tonight. That's why God brought you here. But now you have a choice.

When the Lord came to Elijah with his small still voice. Now Elijah had the choice. He could have continued sitting under that tree.

That poisonous tree of despair and loneliness. And wrong world view. And wrong self view.

I could have sat there and he could have died there. The Lord would not have forced him to go on. But he called him and tenderly spoke to him.

Gave him as much food as he needed. To get to the next stage in his life. And that's the way God will do it for you.

He'll begin to lead you. He'll begin to guide you. He gives you the strength that you need.

To go to the next place that he's called you to go to. But on your part. You've got to leave that old tree behind.

You've got to just simply get up. Or the cave. Or wherever it is you find yourself in right now.

You've just got to leave it behind. And get up and say. God Almighty.

Thank you for loving me. Thank you Lord. When I thought.

When I thought I deserved death. You were speaking life. When I thought it was over.

You're saying it's just beginning. When I thought I couldn't. You said no.

You can. Because I'm coming to you now. We're going to do this together.

This is all brand new. This is. I know.

I'm trying to speak as simply as I can. Because I know many people here are not churched. And you've not understood this.

You've never heard this before. But it is real. It's not a concept about God.

We're talking about a real relationship. With a real living Savior tonight. And if you will open your heart.

The scripture says. He will come in. He will come in.

And you will not need proof. That Jesus Christ is alive. You will change.

From the inside out. Nobody will need to prove it to you. You will know.

That God lives. Because He lives inside of you. You begin to change.

The Bible says. You're given a new mind. You're given a new heart.

You're given a new spirit. You become a new creation. Folks.

I didn't understand everything about God. In 1978. But I had read the gospel of John.

I had met another Christian. Whose life really intrigued me. And I remember.

Pulling over to the side of the road. In my car. And I said.

Jesus. If this is true. I wasn't even really sure.

But I said. God if it is. I want you as my Lord and Savior.

And so I went to work. I finished working my shift. I didn't feel any different.

Went home. Went to bed. Got up the next morning.

And as God lives. I knew. I was a different man.

Something had changed inside of my heart. No resolution had ever done it. No self effort had ever done this.

No amount of value. Or alcohol. Or partying.

Or anything else. Or positive thinking. Had ever done this.

Something had changed inside of my heart. God had come. I had opened the door.

As much as I was able. And he received it. Because it was honest.

It was real. I said. If it's real Jesus.

I want you to come into my life. My God. Thank God for that day.

Thank God for those who told this story to me. What a journey this has been. What friends I have made along the way.

How wonderful to know God. How wonderful to be part of his church. How wonderful to know his body.

Believers. And when you meet a genuine believer. There's a love there that is supernatural.

You can't explain it. It's something that is birthed of God. And you're constantly made aware that you and I are not on this journey alone.

And I thank God for that with all of my heart. Hallelujah to the Lamb of God. Now I know that I'm speaking to somebody tonight.

I know it as surely as I live. That the Lord has sent me with this word tonight. You've come in here with sorrow.

But you're not going to leave here with sorrow. And if all you can muster in your heart. Is Jesus if this is true.

He'll take you there. He'll meet you there. You don't have to have it all together.

You don't have to know all the books of the Bible. You don't have to understand everything theologically. All you have to have in your heart is God.

As much as I know. I'll open the door. And if you are God I trust that you'll come in.

And you'll guide me. And you'll help me. And you'll lead me.

And you'll teach me. And you'll make my life into what you had wanted it to be. Not what I thought it should be.

But what you destined my life to be. And yes I've made mistakes along the way. But you'll help me.

And you'll heal those. He will. You'll still have the memory.

But he'll take the pain away of the memory. He'll heal you. You won't forget.

And the fact that you do remember will produce in your heart a gratitude for the goodness of God. God thank you that you delivered me from being that kind of person. From the pain of those experiences.

And from being a person who's going to repeat that. And bring that same harm to other people that was brought to me. Tonight.

The scripture says if you can hear his voice don't harden your heart. If you can hear him. If there's something in you tonight that just says I know this is right.

I've heard a lot of stuff all of my life. And you have. You've heard stuff I mean it's just everywhere.

But tonight. There's something in us that when we hear the truth we know it's the truth. There's just something inside that says I know this is right.

I don't get it but I know it's right. I know that what I'm hearing is what I've been looking for. What I'm feeling is what I've been longing for.

What's before me now is what I've been wanting all of my life. I'm going to ask you to do something tonight. If that is you.

If you want to open your heart. And receive Jesus Christ. As your Lord and your Savior.

You're giving your whole life to him. And God is giving his whole life to you. If you want to open your heart to receive him tonight.

And to turn from the sin. That has hurt you and caused you to hurt others. You want to be a new person a new creation in Christ Jesus.

If that's in your heart. To live for God. And let God live through you.

And to start walking on this path that God has ordained for your life. I'm going to ask you simply. And unashamedly.

Right now. Raise up your hand. Just do it.

All over the sanctuary. Raise it high. Raise it high.

Glory to God. Glory to God. Glory to God.

Glory to God. I want you to know something tonight. The Bible says that all heaven rejoices over you.

All heaven. Begins to burst into song. The glory of God.

Just probably sweeps the whole area around the throne of God. Just because of you. Not because there's 15 or 20 or 30 or 40 that raise their hands.

But just because of you. If you're the only one. That's how important you are to God.

Now we're going to stand together in a moment. And I want everybody to raise their hand. To make your way to this altar.

We're going to pray together. And we're going to believe God together. That he's going to receive you tonight.

Now if you brought somebody with you. They might be too shy. To come on their own.

But you can turn to the person beside you. And say listen if you want to go. I'll go with you.

But let's stand. We're going to worship just for a moment. And as we do.

Those who raise their hands. Please make your way to this altar tonight. And do it quickly if you will.

Oh thank you Jesus. Thank you Lord. Just slip out.

Let the folks get out. That raised their hands in the annex too. You make your way here.

We'll wait for you. You'll never make a greater decision than this. In your whole life.

Hallelujah. Thank you Lord. Thank you Jesus.

Thank you Jesus. Broken. Wounded.

Ruined lives. Made whole. Sin forgiven.

Hopelessness vanished. New life comes. The miracles of God begin to happen.

Hallelujah. That's the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the power of the gospel.

Just keep stepping out in the balcony of the main sanctuary. Just make your way down. Jesus won't turn one way.

There's not a sin you could have committed. He won't forgive you for. There's no valley too deep that he can't reach you and get you out.

Yes you've made mistakes. But we all have. And he'll forgive you tonight.

Change you. And help you. Just join these that are coming.

Don't be ashamed. Bless the Lord. Oh my soul.

Bless the Lord. Oh my soul. Pray with me those that have come to this altar.

Lord Jesus. I am a sinner. I have lived in a way.

That is wrong. In the sight of God. Lord I've hurt your heart.

And I've hurt other people. And I'm sorry. For the way I have lived.

And I don't want to live this way. Anymore. Tonight.

I make a conscious decision. To turn from sin. And turn to the living God.

I trust in my heart. That you will forgive me. Tonight.

For all the wrong things. That I have done. I believe.

That you will give me the power. To be a new person. The person that you created me to be.

Jesus Christ. Son of God. I open my heart to you.

And I invite you at this moment. To come into my life. And be my Lord.
And my Savior. I give you the rights to my life. I give you my future.
I give you my past. I put everything in your hands. I trust you.
That you will cleanse me of my sin. And give me the power. To be a new person.
A person who lives in the ways of God. From this day forward. I thank you Jesus.
For receiving me. For cleansing me. For forgiving me.
Now fill me. With your presence. And with your spirit.
Put in my heart. A desire. To live right.
In the sight of God. According to your word. Guide me.
Into the future. Help me. To do what is right.
And turn away. From what is wrong. Help me.
To be an influence for good. And for God. In my generation.
I believe. That by the power of God. And the mercy of God.
From this day forward. I will be a follower. Of Jesus Christ.
I believe. That my life. Will be lived for good.
And when I die. I am promised. That I will be received in heaven.
To live with Jesus Christ. Forever. I believe it.
With all my heart tonight. My life is changed. In Jesus name.
Amen. And amen.

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