

Trust

1 Kings 17

DT- The bridge between thanks and giving is trust.

We are currently in a short series looking at thanks and giving. Last week we talked about thanks, and just how thankful we should be for the unshakeable kingdom we are a part of. This week I want to talk about the connection between thanks and giving, and that connection can be summed up with one word, trust. To see an example of trust we're going to go back into the OT and look at how Elijah lived out this crucial principle. Let's pray.

PRAY

We put our trust in things every day. When you come to a stoplight you put your trust in the technology of those lights to not turn everything green and cause a massive accident. Staying in that world of vehicle use we put our trust in the brakes on our cars every time we come to a stop. If you fly often then you put your trust in the Civil Aviation Authority and the Federal Aviation Administration, along with pilots whom you do not know and may never meet again.

We put our trust in doctors when they diagnose us, or surgeons when they operate on us. There's a lot of things we put our trust in. Did you know that every time you step on an elevator you are putting your trust in a man named Elisha Otis. Next time you're in an elevator look around and you'll probably find the name Otis stamped somewhere inside the elevator.

Elisha Otis did not invent the elevator, but he did invent the braking system for elevators. Before his braking system elevators were not all that safe and they would only allow elevators to go up 6 stories high. I sometimes wonder where they came up with 6 stories being safe to fall from, but that 7th story will get you. After Otis invented the braking system people were still apprehensive about elevators so to prove the reliability of his product Otis displayed his elevator at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in downtown Manhattan in 1854.

He repeatedly rode his elevator high above the crowd and then gave the order to cut the rope. The elevator would plunge toward the ground but before it crashed the brakes were applied and the elevator came to a stop safely. Otis's demonstration worked and the Otis elevator began to sell much better because people trusted the creator of its brakes.

We trust many things every day, but do we trust the Creator of heaven and earth? Trusting God is a fundamental issue for every follower of Christ. The bridge between thanks and giving is trust. Without trust you can never move from a place of thankfulness to a place of true biblical giving. What does it look like to trust God? There's several places in scripture that we could go to, but today I want us to look at 1 Kings 17 and the life and ministry of Elijah.

Elijah begins his ministry right around the time that Ahab became king of Israel, and king Asa was at the end of his reign in Judah. Elijah burst onto the scene but then doesn't appear again for 3 years. His first order of business is to confront evil king Ahab and inform him that there will be a nationwide drought. In the midst of this lengthy drought, we will see the trust that Elijah has in God through 3 specific circumstances. The first circumstance is just after his confrontation with Ahab. 1 Kings 17:1-4 says, "Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, "As surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!" Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook, near where it enters the Jordan River. Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food."

Through this drought God would sustain Elijah. God tells him to go hide near this brook that emptied into the Jordan River. At that brook he could drink, and God would send ravens with food. The text says very clearly and without any hesitation that we can see that Elijah did as the Lord told him. The first example of trust that we see from Elijah was his willingness to obey the word of the Lord.

1. Obey the word of the Lord.

The first step to putting your trust in God is to obey. This was Elijah's boot camp; this was his seminary training. For Elijah to accomplish the things that God had in store for him he would need to learn to trust in the Lord. The first lesson of trust came when God sends him to this brook and feeds him by way of the ravens. Elijah, do you trust me enough to not only confront the king on my behalf but then go live near this brook where I promise to sustain you.

That was the word of the Lord that came to Elijah, and from what we can tell Elijah didn't hesitate and he obeyed the Lord fully. 1 Kings 17:5-6 says, "So Elijah did as the Lord told him and camped beside Kerith Brook, east of the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook."

Often the Lord only leads us a step at a time. Have you experienced that? He didn't tell Elijah what his 3-year plan was for him during this drought. God just said go hide yourself. Elijah trusted God and did what he was told not knowing how the next 3 years was going to go. He simply obeyed the word of the Lord.

There will be times in your life and my life when God calls us to do things that may not make sense to us because we can only see the first step. There may be 20 more steps in that journey, but God wants to know do you trust him enough to obey today. This scene of Elijah sitting next to this brook being sustained by God reminds me of Jeremiah 17:7-8 which says, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."

It truly is a blessing to be able to trust in the Lord through obedience to his word. Elijah knew a drought was coming but he obeyed God and trusted that somehow someday God would sustain him. Do you have that kind of trust in God? When was the last time you took a major step of faith? Is God calling you to take a step of faith right now?

This point of trust being our obedience to the word of God reminds me of the hymn Trust and Obey. The chorus says; "Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey." I like the last verse, verse 5 that says, "Then in fellowship sweet, we will sit at his feet, or we'll walk by his side in the way; what he says we will do; where he sends, we will go, never fear only trust and obey."

Is that the kind of trust you have in God? Do you obey him enough that what he says you do, and where he sends you go? Elijah did. Unlike that tree near the water in Jeremiah 17, the brook that God sent Elijah to eventually dried up. Sometimes the plans that we think God has for us change. None of us really know what's ahead, that's why trust is so important.

God was still going to take care of Elijah so in 1 Kings 17:8-13a it says, "Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you." So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, "Would you please bring me a little water in a cup?" As she was going to get it, he called to her, "Bring me a bite of bread, too." But she said, "I swear by the Lord your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die." But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid!"

As you learn to trust God and obey his word don't be afraid.

2. Don't be afraid.

Elijah is showing his own growth in this text. He's already experienced the provision of God in a miraculous way through these ravens bringing him food. Now God has described to him how he will sustain him through this widow, but she is down to her last bit of flour and oil. It's so bad that she assumes her, and her son are going to die. Elijah is going to show her what it looks like to trust in the Lord, and his words are direct; don't be afraid.

God has a plan and purpose for your life if you trust him enough to obey his word, then trust him enough to not be fearful when you begin to take those steps of faith. John Ortberg wrote a book now years ago called "If You Want to Walk On Water You Have To Get Out Of The Boat." In that book he says, "There is always fear. God has an inextinguishable habit of asking people to do things that are scary to them. It may be a fear of inadequacy ("I am slow of speech and slow of tongue," Moses said). It may be a fear of failure ("The land we explored devours those who live in it," cried the spies sent out to the Promised Land). It may even be a fear of God ("For I knew you were a hard man, seeking to reap where you did not sow," claimed the servant in Jesus' parable). But one way or another, there will be fear."

Then John goes on to say that. "The single command in Scripture that occurs more often than any other-God's most frequently repeated instruction-is formulated in two words: Fear Not." Lloyd Ogilvie says there are 366 "fear not" verses in the Bible – one for every day of the year, including one for leap year!

If you're going to trust God and follow Him down the path that he has for you it might get scary; but his command, his instruction is fear not. Don't be afraid, be strong and courageous. You can trust me. A lot of people in scripture that were called by God felt inadequate for the task. This widow in our story felt inadequate and thought she had insufficient supplies to provide for Elijah. He tells the widow in 1 Kings 17:13b-16, "Go ahead and do just what you've said, but make a little bread for me first. Then use what's left to prepare a meal for yourself and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be flour and olive oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!" So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days. There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah."

Elijah trusted God and showed this widow how to trust him fearlessly. No reason to be afraid, God has a plan, God will provide. Some people wrongly say that God will never ask me to do something I can't do. Or God will never give me more than I can handle. That's just not true. Life is more than you can handle, and sometimes God asks us to do things that we can't do in our own strength, with fear. But in his strength and with a fearless attitude and trust in God we can accomplish his God-sized callings. Often what he calls us to is beyond us, because he wants to demonstrate his nature, his strength, his provision, and his kindness. That's how the unbeliever comes to know God.

Paul said this in 1 Timothy 1:15-16, "This is a trustworthy saying, and everyone should accept it: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life."

You think Paul didn't feel inadequate because of the things he had done to the church? He calls himself the worst of sinners yet look how God used him as an example of his patience. If you truly want to trust in the Lord you have to put aside the fear, or better yet let God's power, and presence remind you that there is nothing to fear when we are aligned with his will.

To build this bridge of trust from thanks to giving we must obey the word and we can't be afraid of what God might call us to do. There's one more circumstance in this chapter that demonstrates Elijah's trust in God. It comes through tragedy and then triumph. 1 Kings 17:17-23 says, "Some time later the woman's son became sick. He grew worse and worse, and finally he died. Then she said to Elijah, "O man of God, what have you done to me? Have you come here to point out my sins and kill my son?" But Elijah replied, "Give me your son." And he took the child's body from her arms, carried him up the stairs to the room where he was staying, and laid the body on his bed. Then Elijah cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, why have you brought tragedy to this widow who has opened her home to me, causing her son to die?" And he stretched himself out over the child three times and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, please let this child's life return to him." The Lord heard Elijah's prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he revived! Then Elijah brought him down from the upper room and gave him to his mother. "Look!" he said. "Your son is alive!"

Elijah once again demonstrated his trust in God, but this time through prayer. This example simply reminds us to pray, because the Lord listens.

3. Pray, because the Lord listens.

We don't know how long Elijah lived with this widow and her son but they learned 2 important lessons about God; he can sustain life and he can give life. We might say that was a powerful prayer, but the truth is Elijah trusted a powerful God. Do you? This short time in Elijah's ministry was preparation for a great challenge that was just up ahead for him. In Matthew 25:21 Jesus says, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities."

Elijah had proved his trust in God through a small thing, and next would come even greater responsibility that required even more trust. Have you been faithful with the small things. Have you prayerfully taken things to God trusting him for the answer? He listens, do we pray? I really believe that the bridge between thanks and giving is trust. You can thank the Lord for all the blessings in your life. You can thank him for the discipline and correction he brings. You can thank him for the provision he gives like he did here in the story of Elijah, but if you never step out in faith and trust him, you will never truly be able to give in the way God has called us to.

Think about Peter when he stepped out of the boat and walked on water towards Jesus. Hope is what got Peter out of the boat, fear is what sank him, but trust is what held him up. Trust is that bridge from thanks to giving. I want to close with a Psalm today that reminds us where I trust should be. Psalm 56:1-4 says, "O God, have mercy on me, for people are hounding me. My foes attack me all day long. I am constantly hounded by those who slander me, and many are boldly attacking me. But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you. I praise God for what he has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?"