

Hope Church South Haven July 5th 2026

1 Kings 17:1-7

Standing alone #1

Yesterday many of us celebrated the 4th of July. We WATCHED **fireworks** and GRILLED **burgers** and **hot dogs**. We spent time with family and celebrated 250 years of *American independence*.

And that's a good thing.

- As followers of Jesus, it's **OK** to love your country.
- It's **OK** to be thankful for the freedoms we've been given.
- It's **OK** to be grateful for the people who sacrificed so much so that we can *worship freely this morning*.

At the same time, we need to be honest. Every nation has a complicated story.

- America's story is beautiful in many ways. But it's **also super messy**.
- There are MOMENTS of courage and sacrifice.
- There are MOMENTS of **injustice and racism**.

- There are moments when this nation has been a force for tremendous good in the world.
- And there are moments **we wish we had been different.**

That's true of every nation. No nation has a perfect story because NO NATION is **made up of perfect people.**

- The people on the other side of your beliefs aren't perfect.
- But neither are you.
- And neither am I.

And the Bible never asks us to pretend otherwise.

This morning we're *beginning a new series* that takes us into ANOTHER NATION with a long and complicated history.

- A nation whose story didn't begin with a declaration of independence, but with **one family.**
 - God called man named ABRAHAM. **God promised him** that his family would become a *nation called.*
 - *Israel's* history is filled with incredible moments of faith and **remarkable moments of failure.**
- ⇒ There were victories and **rebellions.**

⇒ Seasons of obedience and **seasons of compromise**.

By the time we arrive in **1st KINGS 17**, Israel is in serious trouble. King Ahab has led the nation away from God and **into the worship of BAAL**. BAAL was the so-called god of rain and fertility and prosperity.

Ahab didn't *merely tolerate idolatry*. He used his **position and resources** to promote it. The prophets of Baal and Asherah were on his payroll.

Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him.

1 Kings 16:33 NIV

Israel still looked religious on the outside. But their **hearts slowly shifted** from *trusting God* to *trusting false gods*.

And into that moment. When A NATION had forgotten where life was really found. God sent one man from the wilderness with a **message that changed everything**.

His name was Elijah.

Verse 1:

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.”

- There is NO BACKSTORY for Elijah. No genealogy. No introduction. No credentials. No impressive résumé.
- **He simply appears.**
- Elijah’s name **preached before he ever said a word**.
- Elijah means – **The LORD is my God**. Every time Ahab heard his name, he was confronted with the truth Israel had forgotten.
- He was a Tishbite from Gilead. This means he was **an outsider**. He wasn’t from the capital. He wasn’t from the religious establishment. He wasn’t from the halls of political power.
- He was just an ORDINARY **man** from an ORDINARY **place**.
- This man *walks into the palace* and stands before the most powerful man in the nation, and **declares**:

There will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.

- Elijah's words are a **direct challenge** to BAAL.
- Israel BELIEVED that Baal controlled the rain.
- Elijah DECLARES that **Yahweh alone rules creation**.
 - ⇒ The DROUGHT wasn't only God's judgment on Israel's rebellion.
 - ⇒ It was God EXPOSING the **emptiness of a powerless idol**.
- The real issue isn't the weather. It's two kingdoms competing for ultimate authority. Who is really God and who truly rules?
- The DROUGHT isn't God losing His temper. The DROUGHT is **God keeping His promises**. In **DEUTERONOMY 11** God had warned that *if His people turned to idols*, He would shut up the skies.

Verse 2-6:

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there." So he did what the Lord had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.

- After Elijah's bold confrontation with Ahab, GOD GIVES him a surprising command. He **sends him into the wilderness**.

- He doesn't say start a revolution or gather an army or start a political party.
- God says: *Go and hide*.
- The BROOK CHERITH was **east of the Jordan**. Beyond Ahab's reach. It was hidden and quiet and forgotten.
- *Exactly where God wanted His prophet*. The Bible shows us that God often does His deepest work in those **hidden places**.
- Before God works through Elijah, He first works in Elijah.
- Then God PROVIDES for Elijah in one of the most unexpected ways imaginable. **He sends ravens**.
 - ⇒ According to Old Testament law, ravens were unclean birds. An absolute no-go for any faithful Jew.
 - ⇒ Ravens were **scavengers**.
 - ⇒ They were known *for taking food*. Not for delivering it.
- Yet every morning and every evening, *the ravens came*. Long before Elijah ever reached the little stream, God had already appointed them. They weren't Plan B.
- Notice the rhythm of God's provision. Bread and meat in the MORNING. Bread and meat in the EVENING.

⇒ It echoes the story of Israel in the desert. **Where God gave manna and quail one day at a time.**

⇒ Not enough for a month. Not enough for a year. Just enough for today.

Verse 7:

Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.

- Then the brook dries up. Elijah experiences the very drought he announced.
- Can you imagine what that must have felt like? Day after day the water level drops. Lower and lower. Until one day, **there's nothing left.**
- At first glance, it looks as though God stopped providing.
- The drying brook isn't a SIGN that God has abandoned Elijah. It's a SIGN **that God is about to provide in a different way.** That God is about to take him on a new journey.
- God removes *one way of providing*. He removes his comfort. His security.
- Elijah needed to learn to **trust the One who provides.** Not the way He provides.

Let's look at this moment from God's perspective.

#1 God's grace is incredibly patient, but He will not compete for the throne.

Before the story is about Elijah. It's about God.

Behind everything moment in Israel's history is a God who has been incredibly patient.

This DROUGHT **didn't come out of nowhere**. God wasn't making up new rules as He went along. Long before this, He had warned His people that **turning from Him would have consequences**. God is **keeping the promises** He made with His people.

For GENERATIONS God had warned His people. For GENERATIONS **rescued them**. For GENERATIONS He provided for them. **Forgiven** them. *Sent judges. Sent prophets*. For GENERATIONS He called them back again and again. Every time they wandered off **God pursued them**.

Remember PSALM 103:8 that we read at the outdoor service:

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger**, *abounding in love*.

It doesn't say God never gets angry. It says God is **slow to anger**. That is a huge difference. God's FIRST INSTINCT is always mercy. He gives chance after chance after chance.

But eventually God will say: **ENOUGH IS ENOUGH**.

Not because He has stopped loving His people but because He loves us too much to let us **keep destroying themselves**.

The problem wasn't simply that Israel *had become less religious*. They were still very religious. They still talked about God. **They simply added another god alongside Him.**

1st Kings 17 reminds us that **God doesn't share His throne.**

We need to understand why. **God is jealous.** But not the way we usually think about JEALOUSY. His JEALOUSY isn't rooted in *insecurity or need*. God's JEALOUSY isn't about protecting His ego. It's about **protecting the people He loves.**

That's why He won't share His throne with idols. Not because He needs our worship.

But because God knows that IDOLS always take more than they promise. God knows that idols **always leave us with less than they offered.**

Idols isn't just a-they-problem. *We do the same thing.* We don't worship Baal. But we all have things we look to for security. **Money** and **success** and **politics** and **relationships** and **comfort** and **approval** and **control**. We look to our careers or our retirement accounts or our ability to fix our OWN PROBLEMS.

We don't just worship the things we love. We slowly become like the things we worship.

- If money becomes our god, **we become anxious**.
- If power becomes our god, **we become controlling**.
- If comfort becomes our god, **we become fragile**.

Someone once said: The human heart is an idol factory. Whatever sits on the throne of our hearts eventually **shapes the kind of people we become**. The idols may have changed but our hearts haven't.

That's what Ahab's kingdom represents. A WORLDVIEW that says **we can secure our own future**. *We don't really need God.*

The world tells us:

- Build your own security.
- Stay in control.
- Save yourself.

We live in a world where *both kingdoms make us promises everyday*.

- One Kingdom says: Take control.
- The other Kingdom says: **Trust God**.
- One Kingdom says: Protect yourself.
- The other Kingdom says: **Follow Me**.

- One Kingdom promises security through what you can build.
- The other Kingdom promises **security through the King who cannot be shaken**.

And this weekend invites each of us to ask an honest question: **Which kingdom am I living for me?** Where does my deepest allegiance really lie?

- We can genuinely love our country.
- We thank God for America.
- We pray for our leaders.
- We serve our neighbors.
- We participate as good citizens.

But our deepest allegiance belongs somewhere else. Our hope isn't ultimately in Washington. Or an election. Or a political party. Or an economy.

Our hope is in our King. Jesus Christ.

The FLAG deserves our respect. It **never deserves our worship**.

Because *before we stand before any nation* **we stand before God**.

And here's the warning of 1st Kings 17.

God is patient. But His patience should **never be mistaken for permission**. Just because

GOD DELAYS JUDGMENT doesn't mean **He has changed His mind about sin**.

- GRACE is never **God's approval of our idols**.
- GRACE is God's invitation to leave them behind and come home.

Now let's see this from Elijah's perspective.

#2 God often provides differently than we expect.

Imagine Elijah hearing God's instructions:

- *Go hide by a brook*. That makes sense.
- *You'll drink from the water*. Makes sense.
- *And ravens will bring you food...what?*

Of all the ways God could have provided He chooses ravens. Scavengers. Unclean birds.

It almost sounds like a bad dad joke. But that's exactly the point.

God is TEACHING us that the way He provides, is **never limited by what seems**

reasonable and possible to us. God isn't limited by our imagination. Sometimes He

provides in ways *we never would have chosen*. Never dreamed off.

1st Kings 17 reminds us that God's PROVISION is often **surprising**. Sometimes it's **temporary**.

But its **never absent**.

Sometimes God provides through:

- a friend who calls at exactly the right time.
- a doctor whose wisdom changes everything.
- a church family that carries us when we can't carry ourselves.
- a closed door that later proves to be the better door.
- an answer to prayer that looks nothing like the one we were expecting.

I think many of us can look back and say:

At the time I thought I was barely surviving. Looking back, I can see God was taking care of me
all along.

In the moment all we could see were the questions and the delays and the uncertainty.

Looking back **our stories are full of ravens.**

- We remember the conversation that changed everything.
- The person God placed in our path.
- The strength we didn't know we had.

At the time it all felt ordinary. Looking back, we realize **God had been caring of us all
along.**

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.

Then comes one of the most challenging verses in the story:

Some time later the brook dried up.

At first glance it LOOKS like God has stopped providing. **But that's not what's happening.** God never promised Elijah this brook will last forever. **He promised that He will take care of him.**

The method changes. The **promise didn't**.

I wonder how many of us are standing beside a drying little stream right now.

- A relationship.
- Your health.
- A dream that isn't unfolding the way you imagined.

Our instinct is to panic. To desperately try to get the water flowing again. But Elijah *teaches us another response*. When the stream dries up don't assume that God has abandoned you. **Listen for His next word.** He will provide.

The God who rules the drought is also the **God who sends the ravens**.

The God who allows the brook to dry up is the God **who never runs out of ways to care for His people.**

And Calvary settled that promise forever.