

Sermon Title: **Giving it All**

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Scripture Reference: **1 Kings 17:8-16**

Thesis: **Elijah asks a single parent to give up all that she had and to trust God to provide for them;**

Purpose: **We cannot truly learn to trust God until we are willing to trust God for everything.**

Key Word: "Sacrificial Giving"

Key Points: #1 Sacrificial Giving Requires Obedience

#2 Sacrificial Giving Requires Faith

#3 Sacrificial Giving is Rewarded

I) Introduction:

Scripture Reading is: **1 Kings 17:8-16**

A) The Setting:

1) **Some of us experienced a severe drought**

- (a) Some people had problems with their wells
- (b) Lakes and water supplies were lower
- (c) But to my knowledge no one was in danger of dying from this drought.

2) **However, in Israel more than 850 years before Christ was born they had a drought that lasted three and 1/2 half years.**

- (a) Imagine a drought that lasts so long that people are dying.
- (b) Could not just go to the store and buy bottled water.

3) **This was an extreme time when Ahab was the King of Israel and Jezebel, the daughter of a foreign king was taken as his wife.**

- (a) Ahab's legacy is that he was the most wicked King that Israel every had.
- (b) And Jezebel brought her foreign god Baal to Israel.
- (c) Baal and his consort mother, Asherah, were gods of storm, rain and fertility.

4) **To answer this wickedness God sent Elijah, the prophet, to announce God's judgment of no rain.**

- (a) In a game of "To Tell the Truth" God would establish who was really in charge.
- (b) The water drought was symbolic of the spiritual drought that was taking place;
- (c) As many in Israel turned to this new evil god that required the murder of infants as part of their sacrifice.

5) **As Chapter 17 opens we are introduced to Elijah as he appears to King Ahab to announce the drought.**

- (a) Elijah lived in the wilderness wearing a leather loin cloth and a camel-haired coat.
- (b) He probably looked crazy and Ahab probably dismissed him as a nut at this first meeting.
- (c) I wonder what he thought though as the drought wore on year after year.

6) **As God does, even in times of severe circumstances; God would take care of His prophet.**

- (a) But as we will see it will require some faith not only from Elijah; but also from a poor widow.
- (b) God first takes care of Elijah using ravens to feed him while he camps by a stream in northern Israel.
- (c) But as the drought wears on the stream dries up and God tells Elijah to find a widow who will now provide food.
- (d) **So, let's pick up our story here with our reading for today in 1 Kings 17:8-16.**

B) *Sermon Prayer*

C) (The Hook)

1) **This is not just some elderly widow; this is a single mother raising her only son on her own.**

- (a) Many people today right here in this city are struggling to do the same thing.

- (b) Trying to make enough to eek out a living to pay the bills and put food on the table.
- 2) **Yes there is some help available from the state; but many who are really working are caught in the middle between not enough to pay for everything...**
 - (a) Making too much to qualify for help.
 - (b) Especially if the shortfall is caused by medical bills.
 - (c) Many a mother in this situation has gone without healthcare for themselves and their children that most of us take for granted.
- 3) **But it could just as easily been any number of broken people who have fallen on hard times.**
 - (a) Yes, in some cases it is self inflicted; but not in many cases.
 - (b) Deadbeat dads, alcoholics, drug additions, effect many innocent family members.
- 4) **This is why programs like the sandwich program and feeding the hungry are not only necessary; but Biblical in caring for our neighbors.**
 - (a) Here we have a gentile widow in the depths of despair not just having a hard time; but facing starvation and death for her son.
 - (b) Yet God is about to answer her need because God knows her heart; and knows that she will give her all.

TS: So let's take a look at what lessons we can learn from her sacrificial giving in loving her neighbor; the first thing I noticed is that . . .

II) Body: (Key Points)

A) Key Point #1: **Sacrificial Giving Requires Obedience**

- 1) **Let's be honest; how many of you would be willing to listen to some foreign street person who showed up at your door asking you to feed him the last bit of bread you have in the house?**
 - (a) It wasn't even enough for a meal for one let alone enough for her and her son!
 - (b) Yet, here is this smelly outdoors-man who shows up and tells her to fix the last amount of food she has for him and that God will supply enough for them all to eat until the drought is over.
 - (c) Yeah, right!
- 2) **But she showed obedience by doing as instructed.**
 - (a) Maybe she thought she has nothing to loose. . .
 - (b) This wasn't some devote Jew; she wasn't even a believing or practicing Jew.
 - (c) She was from the country where Jezebel was from right in the heart of Baal worshippers.
- 3) **Moses wrote, ". . . you and your children obey him, (the Lord your God) with all your heart and with all your soul, just as I am commanding you today . . ."** (Deuteronomy 30:2) NRSV
 - (a) Ask yourself, could God show up as a homeless person?
 - (b) Hebrews 13:2 teaches us, "**Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.**" NRSV
- 4) **I think the Bible is pretty clear in teaching that we are to help others even if it means giving sacrificially.**
 - (a) **It was inconvenient for the good Samaritan to stop and help the man who was beaten, striped and robbed.**
 - (i) He had to bandage and care for his wounds . . .
 - (ii) He had to dress the man with some of the few clothes he had . . .
 - (iii) He had to take time to find him a place to stay and paid for his care . . .
 - (b) **In Jesus' parable a temple priest and worker both could not be bothered.**
 - (i) Probably surmised, that he deserved what happened.
 - (ii) Yet, Jesus taught we are to be neighbors to those in need.
- 5) **Sacrificial means giving until it hurts.**
 - (a) Do we give to God as much as we feel God is asking us to give?

- (b) Or are we just giving out of what is left?

TS: **This leads to our next point . . .**

B) Key Point #2: **Sacrificial Giving Requires Faith**

- 1) **Our sacrificial giving is an expression of our faith in God's ability to provide.**
 - (a) How much do you really trust God to provide for your needs?
 - (b) How much do we as a church depend on God to provide for our needs?
- 2) **Our widow trusted Elijah enough that she was willing to do as he asked.**
 - (a) She demonstrated faith;
 - (b) Howbeit, small as it may have been.
- 3) **Yet, Jesus taught that faith as small as a tiny mustard seed was enough to move mountains.**
 - (a) When was the last time you saw God move a mountain in your life?
 - (b) Did you trust God in faith to provide your need.
- 4) **I had an Uncle who smoked for years even after he became a Christian.**
 - (a) He never seemed to be able to quit until a building project came up in his church and he decided to give his cigarette money to the project.
 - (b) He stated from that day on his craving for cigarettes ceased.
 - (c) God took his sacrifice and helped him defeat his slavery to nicotine.
- 5) **We have to believe that God is faithful and will provide our needs.**
- 6) **This is true for our church as well.**
 - (a) One reason I think we are missing out on God's blessings here in our church is we have shown no need for God to act.
 - (b) We have it all covered by our bank account and management of funds.
- 7) **We are taking care of the church building; but for what purpose?**
 - (a) What ministry is God calling us to be involved in?
 - (b) God's church does not exist to just care for itself;
 - (c) God's church has been given a directive to make disciples, to baptize and teach them to obey what God has taught us? (**Matthew 28:19-20**)
- 8) **Why?**
 - (a) So that we can bring others into the kingdom of God by introducing them to God;
 - (b) And then guiding them on what God desires.
- 9) **What does God desire?**
 - (a) We are to worship the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind. (**Matthew 22:37-40**)
 - (b) This is our entire being, physical spiritually, and mentally.
- 10) **Everything we have is God's for we came naked into this world and will leave it the same way.**
 - (a) The only thing that counts is our relationships.
 - (b) Our relationship with God and with each other.

TS: **This brings us to our last point . . .**

C) Key Point #3: **Sacrificial Giving is Rewarded.**

- 1) We cannot out give God no matter how hard we try.
- 2) God will reward us in ways we can never imagine and the best ones are not by paying us back in the same way we give.
- 3) **Consider this Illustration from Jim Cymbala's Easter Story¹**

- (a) **Jim Cymbala preaches at a church in the slums of New York. He tells the following story:** It was Easter Sunday and I was so tired at the end of the day that I just went to the edge of the platform, pulled down my tie and sat down and draped my feet over the edge. It was a wonderful service with many people coming forward. The counselors were talking with these people.
- (b) **As I was sitting there I looked up the middle aisle, and there in about the third row was a man who looked about fifty, disheveled, filthy.** He looked up at me rather sheepishly, as if saying, "Could I talk to you?"
- (c) **We have homeless people coming in all the time, asking for money or whatever.** So as I sat there, I said to myself, though I am ashamed of it, "What a way to end a Sunday. I've had such a good time, preaching and ministering, and here's a fellow probably wanting some money for more wine."
- (d) **He walked up.** When he got within about five feet of me, I smelled a horrible smell like I'd never smelled in my life. It was so awful that when he got close, I would inhale by looking away, and then I'd talk to him, and then look away to inhale, because I couldn't inhale facing him. I asked him, "What's your name?"
- (e) "**David.**"
- (f) "How long have you been on the street?"
- (g) "**Six years.**"
- (h) "How old are you?"
- (i) "**Thirty-two.**" He looked fifty--hair matted; front teeth missing; wino; eyes slightly glazed.
- (j) "Where did you sleep last night, David?"
- (k) "**Abandoned truck.**"
- (l) **I keep in my back pocket a money clip that also holds some credit cards.** I fumbled to pick one out thinking; I'll give him some money. I won't even get a volunteer. They are all busy talking with others. Usually we don't give money to people. We take them to get something to eat.
- (m) **I took the money out. David pushed his finger in front of me.** He said, "I don't want your money. I want this Jesus, the One you were talking about, because I'm not going to make it. I'm going to die on the street."
- (n) **I completely forgot about David, and I started to weep for myself.** I was going to give a couple of dollars to someone God had sent to me. See how easy it is? I could make the excuse I was tired. There is no excuse. I was not seeing him the way God sees him. I was not feeling what God feels.
- (o) **But oh, did that change! David just stood there.** He didn't know what was happening. I pleaded with God, "God, forgive me! Forgive me! Please forgive me. I am so sorry to represent You this way. I'm so sorry. Here I am with my message and my points, and You send somebody and I am not ready for it. Oh, God!"
- (p) **Something came over me.** Suddenly I started to weep deeper, and David began to weep. He fell against my chest as I was sitting there. He fell against my white shirt and tie, and I put my arms around him, and there we wept on each other. The smell of His person became a beautiful aroma. Here is what I thought the Lord made real to me: If you don't love this smell, I can't use you, because this is why I called you where you are. This is what you are about. You are about this smell.
- (q) **Christ changed David's life.** He started memorizing portions of Scripture that were incredible. We got him a place to live. We hired him in the church to do maintenance, and we got his teeth fixed. He was a handsome man when he came out of the hospital. They detoxed him in 6 days.

- (r) **He spent that Thanksgiving at my house.** He also spent Christmas at my house. When we were exchanging presents, he pulled out a little thing and he said, "*This is for you.*" It was a little white hanky. It was the only thing he could afford.
- (s) **A year later David got up and talked about his conversion to Christ.** The minute he took the mic and began to speak, I said, "*The man is a preacher.*" This past Easter we ordained David. He is an associate minister of a church over in New Jersey. And I was so close to saying, "Here, take this; I'm a busy preacher."
- (t) We can get so full of ourselves.
- 4) **This is what it is all about; saving souls and changing lives.**
 - (a) The Church is asked to give of themselves in order to reach people for Jesus.
 - (b) The rewards are greater than you can ever imagine.

TS: **So, what about us . . .**

III) Conclusion (Life Application)

A) **Is there still a spiritual drought?**

- 1) Are we so far from God that all we can think about is ourselves.
- 2) God is in the business of changing lives and preparing for the life after this one.

B) **Are we clinging to everything here like it is our last possession?**

- 1) Do we need to be reminded that what we have has been given to us as stewards?
- 2) How will the master say we have done with our resources when He returns?
- 3) Are we using it to expand the kingdom or to keep ourselves comfortable?

C) **It is a challenge to do as the widow did and trust that God will provide.**

- 1) But God only provides for those who are doing His work and His will.
- 2) How can we as a church in the kingdom find God's will for us?

D) **This is the question we need to be asking?**

- 1) It is not about how to get more people to conform to what we like . . .
- 2) It is not about our favorite hymns . . .
- 3) it is not about a social club.
- 4) All these things take a back seat to the real work of ministry.

E) **Did you know that God is already actively working in our neighborhood preparing the way for us?**

- 1) It is our job to find out what that is and give ourselves sacrificially to get in tuned with what God is doing.
- 2) When we give ourselves fully to what God is doing we will experience real joy and rewards beyond our imagination.

F) **I believe that God wants to bless us; but only if we are doing what He commands us to do and start acting in Faith to see God at work.**

- 1) It begins by coming together in prayer and asking God to show us what He wants and really mean it.
- 2) It happens when we give of ourselves sacrificially . . .
- 3) **I am not just talking about our money . . . but by giving our whole selves to God and His work.**

(a) Then we can bring Glory to God and see His blessings on our church.

(b) Are you ready to see God really working here in this place?

IV) Invitation: **Let us Pray!**