

“ELIJAH, A MAN LIKE US.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Text for the Sermon: James 5:16-18

Introduction.

As we come to the conclusion of our series on the life of Elijah, as you think back about him would you draw the conclusion he was a man like us, that he was a man with a nature like ours?

Elijah was the first and greatest of the prophets of God in the OT. How many of us think we are in the same league with him? He seems more like a man in a class all by himself.

If we were going to pick someone in the Bible who has like us, I think we would pick a lot of other people before we came to Elijah. Peter might come to mind for several reasons.

The truth of the matter is all the people in the Bible are like us, ordinary people who God used in extraordinary ways, despite their sin.

Elijah put his tunic on one arm at a time just like us. He was prone to feelings of defeat or loneliness. He was dependent on God just as we are. He was used of God just as God uses us.

Let's summarize him and his life and draw out *nine conclusions and applications*.

1. Elijah was a man of God

Elijah was a man of God who served the true God as a prophet of God and experienced the power of God.

After he raised the widow's son she said, "Now I know that you are a man of God" (I Kings 17:24). When King Ahaziah sent commanders of fifty to get Elijah, each of them said, "Man of God come down!" (II Kings 1:9-10) and Elijah replied, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you."

He obeyed God, he did what God told him to do, he said what God told him to say. He experienced God's provision in his life as he depended on God to give him food and water on several occasions. He was a man called by God, equipped by God, used of God.

Like King David, Elijah was a man after God's own heart who did the will of God.

In all these ways may we be a man or woman of the true God like Elijah.

2. **Elijah was a man who walked by faith and not by sight.**

This was not mystical or nebulous, but intensely personal, present and practical.

II Corinthians 4:18 We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

II Corinthians 5:7 We walk by faith, not by sight.

A person who walks by faith and not by sight is able to look beyond circumstances and see Him who controls and rules all circumstances. He sees a God who never fails or falls short, who can be fully relied on in every circumstance.

May we be like Elijah who walked by faith and not by sight.

3. **Elijah was a man who walked in complete separation from the world and the evil around him.**

I Kings 1:8 He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist.

He had an uncommon lifestyle. He separated himself from the world and the world's ways. He didn't try to fit in or go along with the crowd. He certainly wasn't fashion conscious.

Romans 12:2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

He was a man of uncompromised integrity. He didn't try to be cozy with the world.

Ephesians 5:11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

James 4:4 "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

I Timothy 6:11-12 But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.

Elijah stood up to the taunts and threats of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and King Ahaziah. He was unwavering.

May we be like Elijah and separate ourselves from the world and evil, from sinful ways.

4. **Elijah was a man of marked elevation of spirit, a mountain man.**

II Kings 1:9 He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill.

We constantly find him in high places

The hill country of Gilead

Mount Carmel, for confrontation and then for prayer

Mount Horeb

On top of a hill in II Kings 1:9

Mount of Transfiguration in Mark 9.

His heart and affections were set on things above. God was the object of His faith and God dwells on high.

He was a man who spent time alone with God. He drew apart, he spent time in the wilderness. We all need solitude from this world, fasting from all that connects us to this world, time to connect with God, time to be still and know that God is God.

Mark 6:31 Jesus said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

May we like Elijah who get to the mountain, who spend time alone with God, who seek further up and further in, who pray for this.

5. **Elijah was a mighty man of prayer, an intercessor.**

James 5:16-18 The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. 17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land

for three and a half years. 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Elijah is purposefully held up for us as an example to be followed. Prayer necessarily flows from a life of faith. To walk by faith requires prayer.

But notice the motive, Elijah's prayers flowed from a pure heart. He prayed that God would be glorified, that all would know that God was the one true God. He prayed that God would vindicate His great and holy name. He prayed for the ultimate good of God's people (I Kings 18:36-37).

Are you in spiritual drought? Then pray as Elijah did for God to send rain, spiritual rain.

Think about it, how many things do you do in your daily life that you do without praying. Why? What steps could you take to change that?

Colossians 4:2 Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
I Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.

May we be like Elijah, people of prayer, in everything.

6. **Elijah was a man of God's Word.**

I Kings 17:2 The word of the Lord came to him.

I Kings 17:5 So he went and did according to the word of the Lord.

Cherith Ravine, widow in Sidon, confrontation with Ahab, call of Elisha, confrontation with Ahaziah. Repeatedly Elijah heard God's Word and obeyed. Elijah heard clearly God's specific will.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 As for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

May we be like Elijah, men and women of the Word of God.

7. **Elijah was a man of great courage, spiritual boldness.**

He who truly fears God is fearless of man. Elijah could stand before kings because he first knelt before God.

Proverbs 28:1 The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.

Elijah was a man of heroism, he stood up, he took responsibility, he didn't shrink back from enemies. But he wasn't a superhero, he was a man like us.

Being strong and courageous is the theme of next Sunday's Cadet Sunday.

Joshua 1:7, 9 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. ... 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

May we be like Elijah, men and women of spiritual boldness.

8. **Elijah was a man who experienced some kind of despair unto death.**

I Kings 19:3 (KJV) And when he *saw* that, he arose, and went for his life.

He was an earthen vessel. He felt alone in the world. He took his eye off the Lord for a brief season. Like Peter walking on the water.

Elijah saw how things really were and how hard the hearts really were. Elijah saw that what happened on the mountain had not changed the hearts. His despair over Israel caused him to want to die.

1 Corinthians 10:11-13 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Hebrews 12:3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

May we be men like Elijah, who when we fall, will look to the Lord who will lift us up.

9. **Elijah was a man who had a supernatural exit from this world.**

Some day we will all have a supernatural exit, we will all be supernaturally transported from this world to the next.

I Corinthians 15:51-58 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Conclusion.

While Elijah holds a special place in redemptive history, James wants us to know that every believer, dressed in the righteousness of Jesus, pursuing likeness to Jesus, can have an effective prayer life like Elijah and be mightily used by God.

I Kings 18:36 And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, *let it be known this day that you are God in Israel*, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.

May we live in the spirit and manner of Elijah, may we be salt and light, may our life be such that we “let it be known each day that there is a God” and He is real, personal and present. And that we are His servant.

Elijah, a man like us. Take that to heart, reflect on these things and apply them.

Prayer: Holy Father, in whose presence we live and move and have our being, by the power and presence of your Holy Spirit make us more mindful of you, who is always mindful of us. May your presence within us transform our daily lives, deliver us from all earthly and worldly fears, and set our souls free to love you and others with the same freedom that Jesus had.