

Sunday, July14, 2024 Sunday Morning Worship Sermon

「What Nourishes Elijah」 Pastor : Takaaki Inoue
1 Kings 17:1~16, Matthew 6:30~34

① 【The Lord lives】

In the Old Testament, there is a famous prophet named Elijah. The word "yogen" has two kanji characters: "prophecy" and "prophecy". "Prophecy" is used to predict the future in advance. On the other hand, "prophecy" is to keep the word of God and convey it. God also speaks of the present, the past, and the future, so prophecy is included in prophecy. Apart from this, "seers" come into play. These people can not only hear the words, but also see images of future events.

Now Elijah says to Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel. "The LORD God of Israel, whom I serve, lives, and for several years there shall be no dew and no rain until I tell you." The phrase "the Lord lives" appears more than 40 times in the Old Testament, meaning "God really exists, not a lie." Famine and drought are spoken of in the Bible as curses from God. "If you do evil deeds and forsake me, the Lord will send curses, confusion, and chastisement for all the works of your hands... The heavens above your head will be red copper, and the earth below you will be iron. The LORD will dust the rain of your earth, and will bring down grains of sand from heaven." (Deuteronomy 28:20, 23~24) Some people will read this and think it is horrible, while others will laugh at it as a fiction or myth of the old people. Some pastors say it's a myth. Those who laugh are those who have never experienced God's words becoming reality. I don't know because I've never obeyed God's word. But only those who obey God's word can speak the words, "The Lord really lives." I fear God. I believe that the extreme global weather that I talked about last week is also a punishment and a warning from God. It is a terrible thing to turn God against you.

② 【A raven and a widow feeding Elijah】

The LORD God speaks to Elijah: "Hide yourself on the banks of the river Kerito, and drink the water of that river. I will command the raven to feed you there." (1 Kings 17:3~4) The Kerit River is only said to be east of Jordan, and its location is not clear even today. However, since it says "Hide", you can imagine that it was a secluded place. It is never easy to leave your home and go into the wilderness. When a person tries to live according to God's word, he or she feels anxious about what to eat and live. And in order to eat, to live, many people hesitate to obey God's word. I think Elijah probably did the same. So the Lord promised, "I will command the raven to feed you there." Who can trust such a promise? But Elijah was not an unreliable crow, but believed in and obeyed the

promised God. At that time, several ravens brought bread and meat to Elijah in the morning and bread and meat in the evening. It was there that he was able to experience God nourishing him.

After a while, the river also dried up. Then God said to Elijah, "Arise and go to Sarepta in Sidon and dwell there, and I will command a widow to feed you there." (Ibid. 17:9). So Elijah got up and went to Sarepta. When we entered the town, we met a widow who was collecting firewood. When Elijah asks her for water and bread, she says, "I only have a handful of flour and a little oil in my house, and after eating it, all I have to do is wait to die." Elijah said, "Do not be afraid, go back and do as you say. But first, make a little pastry for me, and bring it to me." The Lord says: "Until the day when the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth, the powder in the jar of your house will not run out, and the oil in the jar will not run out" (Ibid. 17:13~14). Hearing this, it is written, "And the widow went and did as Elijah said" (7:15). I think it's amazing. She shared the last of her and her children's food with Elijah. You have entrusted your life and your child's lives to God's word, and you have bet on God's promises. Then, as Elijah had said, the powder in the jar was not exhausted, the oil in the jar was not exhausted, and there was no shortage of food. I would like to talk about two things from here.

③ [Believe in the place that God has commanded you to be]

God said twice, "I will feed you there" (verses 4, 17). I don't know what kind of river the Kerito River is. It may have been a narrow river with only a small flow. But I was told, "I'll feed you there." It's about believing in the place God has placed. Of course, if you are no longer fed there, God will take you to the next place. However, if you just move around with human thoughts, you will never be nourished. As the monk says, "If you plant and pull out, plant and pull out, when will the roots grow?"

● Before I came to Miyakojima Church, I was scheduled to be assigned to a church on a small island called Tejima in the Seto Inland Sea. At that time, Miyakojima Church had a baby center from Monday ~ Saturday and kept the service on Sunday. However, the pastor Mr./Ms. hurt his leg and could not provide childcare, so he had to resign, so there was a sudden shortage of people. So they said, "Anyone can come," and our family came. At that time, I was still a seminarian, and I went to school while living at Miyakojima Church. My wife worked at a baby center as a nursery teacher. When I became a pastor, my first salary was 50,000 yen. There were only two Ms. believers, and those two eventually stopped coming and sometimes the three of them worshipped together. Many pastors have come and gone. But I stayed here. I thought that if it didn't work here, it would be the same everywhere I went. If you don't stay

true to the small things, you won't be entrusted with the big things. I said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God, and all these things will be given to you." (Matthew 6:33) and prayed every day. If this statement was a lie, I thought I would give up my Christian faith. This is because the other promises in the Bible are also lies. However, as promised, God sent one person after another to help, gave me a job, showed me a miracle, and met my needs. Until today, I have not had a single day of trouble in my life.

④ [Nourish through an unexpected person]

God said that He would feed Elijah through the raven and the widow. I can understand it if it is "command the rich", but "crows and widows" are powerless and unreliable no matter how you look at it. But God feeds you through your weakness and unreliability. It is to teach that it is God, not man, who feeds man. I believe that all the people who come to church are people sent by God. I have been trying to see and relate to that person in that way until today. The Lord sent many mentally handicapped people to this church. The other day, when I spoke to a committee meeting, everyone was impressed by the variety of people who came to your church. The Lord will be sent. As the saying goes, "Don't choose someone who has never been sick as your friend," they taught me what it means to be human, learned how to keep a distance from others, and gave me courage to see them live with illness. I was made a pastor through them. God nourishes our souls through magical methods and through the people he thinks he is.

I think the most important thing for a Christian is whether the person is acting on the "word of God," whether he or she lives by God rather than man, and whether he or she knows God. I want to be a person who can boldly say, "The Lord God, whom I serve, lives" to anyone, anywhere. How can you tell us about Christ if you don't know Him? If we want to share Christ, we must first become an experiencer of His great power. In the early church, in order to be recognized as an apostle, one had to "meet the resurrected Christ." Peter says. "I have witnessed the majesty of Christ" (II Peter 1:16~17) If the present church has no power, if the words of the sermon slip up, it is because they do not experience Christ, but speak only with knowledge. Those who do not know God are speaking of God, and those who do not know Christ are preaching Christ. That's why it doesn't have the power and doesn't communicate. Don't do that. Therefore, we must first obey God's word. Then you can experience the "living God." If you are going to have faith anyway, let's have real faith, not just form. Let us pray that the Lord will give us that feeling.