**Press On – With Prayer** (February 22, 2017)

**“When God Says Yes”**

Scripture Text: 1 Kings 17:8-24 (NLT)

8Then the Lord said to Elijah, 9“Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon.

I have instructed a widow there to feed you.”

10So 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?” 11As she was going to get it, he called to her, “Bring me a bite of bread, too.”

12But 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.”

13But Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid! 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. 14For 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!”

15So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her family continued to eat for many days. 16There was always enough flour and olive oil left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

17Some time later the woman’s son became sick. He grew worse and worse, and finally he died. 18Then 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?”

19But 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. 20Then 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?”

21And 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.” 22The Lord heard Elijah’s prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he revived! 23Then Elijah brought him down from the upper room and gave him to his mother. “Look!” he said. “Your son is alive!”

24Then the woman told Elijah, “Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the Lord truly speaks through you.

**Helpful Background for the Passage**

1. Elijah lived in dismal times. They were times of spiritual apostasy and moral decay. But, he stood against the predominant opinion of his culture and of his king, and said and did what the one true God had given him to say and do. Elijah is one of the most prominent figures in the Word of God. His significance is evidenced by over 20 direct references to him in the New Testament. Elijah is also one of only two OT saints that are given the opportunity to meet with Jesus during the transfiguration on the mountain. (FYI: Moses was the other OT faithful one there.)

2. Just to remind us of a bit of background: Upon the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam took over the throne of his father. The ten tribes of Israel (all but Judah and Benjamin), sought a relief from the difficult burden of taxation and required labor that had been instituted by Solomon. Rehoboam was a young man accustomed to extreme prosperity and luxury. Rather than reduce the heavy taxation and end the labor service imposed by Solomon, he acted selfishly and foolishly. He refused the counsel of the older men to cut back, and threatened to increase taxes because he wanted to continue enjoying a lavish court. As a result, the ten tribes seceded immediately and there was a division of the kingdom.

3. Jeroboam, an official in Solomon’s court who was a popular leader in the north, then became king of the northern ten tribes of Israel. Rather than seeking the glory of God and the benefit of his people, he followed his own selfish agenda and committed terrible sins against God’s law. He established a substitute worship for his people, along with two new worship centers, one at Dan and another at Bethel. As symbols for the new places of worship, he made golden images of calves. His proposed aim was to worship Yahweh, but his real motive was political and selfish. He wanted to keep the people from going back to Jerusalem because of his fear they would eventually want to reunite into one kingdom. He put his own desires ahead of God’s will and the good of the people. It set the people up for unfaithfulness to the true God with the fertility cult of Baal. This began a decades long slide into the worship of false gods led by the king, who was supposed to model obedience and faithfulness to the one true God. The new substitute worship begun under Jeroboam paved the way for the introduction of Baal worship under Ahab and Jezebel in the time of Elijah.

4. The northern kingdom under Ahab had slid so far into sin that God sent a powerful prophet to warn and discipline the people and their clueless king. Elijah spoke the Word of the Lord to Ahab, and then had to flea for his life. Elijah told the king and the people that God would withholf the rain until there was repentance. Then, God led Elijah to safety to wait out the terrible times during the long drout. God led Elijah first to the wilderness, then to a village where he met a very kind and faithful widow.

**Review Questions**

5. (17:8-12) Whydid Elijah need help? Why did he go to this village and approach this widow? What was her situation? How did the widow respond to Elijah?

6. (17:13-16) So, what happened? What did Elijah say to the widow, and why? How did the widow conduct herself? How did God provide? How did this provision happen? How is this God saying “yes” to both Elijah and the widow?

7. (17:17-20) What terrible trial happened? How did the widow respond? Why is this “normal,” and how did Elijah respond to her? What did Elijah do? Why? What did he pray? Who took the blame?

8. (17:21-24) What bold and specific prayer did Elijah pray? How did he pray? Why? How did God respond? What happened? What was the result?

**Application:** (So What?)

\*9. (17:13) In tough circumstances, what causes fear or anxiety? How can obeying and/or trusting God both help and hinder this worry/anxiety? How does obedience and trust often reveal a “yes” from God?

\*10. (17:15-16) Can you identify with the widow? How have you experienced God’s provision through your trust and obedience? How did God say “yes” to your prayers through previous or present provision?

11. Have you ever experienced a miraculous “yes” from God? What happened, and how did you respond? How can we experience a “yes” from God while still praying for a miraculous yes?