

The future belongs to God. Do you believe that, Christians? Do you believe that so that you are patient in the midst of your trials? So that you are confident in the face of every uncertainty? Or do you struggle with that, so that you are impatient and confused and wondering what the future may hold? Those are the questions that we must ask ourselves this morning. But Christians, the future belongs to God. And when we remember that, we can face all things. When we remember that, we can stand firm against every worldly trouble.

Because Elijah in our Old Testament reading for today was a mighty man of God. A man who lived in the days of King Ahab, one of the very worst kings that Israel ever had. He was a king who fell into all kinds of idolatry, a king who worshiped all kinds of false gods. And so Elijah comes to him. And to show him that there is only one God, to show him that there is only one true God, and that is the Lord, Elijah prayed for a drought. We hear that in 1 Kings 17, verse 1, where it says: "Now Elijah said to Ahab, 'As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years except by my word.'" And that's exactly what happened, Christians. There was a severe drought that came because of his prayer. And as we hear in James 5, verse 17: "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months, it did not rain on the earth." Three years and six months! That's three, maybe four failed harvests. But the purpose of it was to humble Ahab. It was to show him that there is only one God, and that Elijah was his servant.

But did Elijah waiver or start to panic? Thinking, "Oh no! What have I done? Maybe I should pray for the rains to come back so that we make sure that we have enough to eat?" No, that's not what he did. Because Elijah knew that the future belongs to God. And that during this drought, God was going to take care of him. During this drought, God would provide him with everything that he needed. And that's exactly what God did, as we hear again in 1 Kings 17: "The word of the Lord came to him, 'Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.' So he went and did according to the word of the Lord. He went and lived by the brook Cherith that is east of the Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook." And in this way, Christians, God took care of Elijah. He provided for all of his needs by commanding those birds, by commanding those ravens to bring him what he needed twice a day. Because God doesn't need grocery stores and semi trucks; God doesn't need tractors and fields; God doesn't need your jobs or even your own two hands to give you the things that you need. He uses those things, absolutely he does! But he doesn't need them, because God can take care of you in every single circumstance, because the future belongs to God. And so Elijah did not sit by that brook, worrying and fretting about what the future may hold. Elijah trusted in the Lord, knowing that he would take care of him. And you too, Christians, can do the same, because God will not fail to provide for those who trust in him.

But then things changed, as we hear in verse 7: "After a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land." Did Elijah start to panic now? Start to worry and say, "What am I going to do? What am I going to do? There's no food left! I'm going to starve"? No, he didn't. Because he knew that the future belongs to God and that God would take care of him. And that's exactly what God does, when he says to him in our reading for today: "Arise, go to Zerephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." He

commanded this woman who didn't even know who he was, who wasn't a believer, because she was not part of Israel. He commanded her to take care of Elijah, because God can use all things, even the lives of unbelievers, to take care of his own. God directs and rules the world so that we will not lack what we need.

But this woman, on the other hand, unbelieving as she is, thinks the way that the world does. Because she sees this drought and she's worried. She's afraid. she feels hopeless, even doomed! "There's no food to eat! There's nothing for us to take care of us. My son is too small to provide for me. It doesn't seem like there's any way out of this. It doesn't seem like I have any kind of hope." So when Elijah meets her, she's gathering sticks in order to prepare to die. And I'm sure that she was quite desperate, Christians. She certainly felt that way. And I'm sure that in her mind she thought, "Whatever it takes, I will do it to provide for my family." She must've certainly thought to herself "Whatever I can do! Maybe I can have a future if..."--Christians, how often are we tempted by that same "if"!--Maybe I can have a future if I just give in. Maybe I can have a future if I do something I think is wrong. Maybe I can have a future if I just work a little harder. Maybe I can have a future if I do this. Maybe I can have a future if I do that. Whatever it may be, we think that if we just do that, then everything will be okay.

But Christians, the future doesn't belong to you. The future belongs to God. And God will not fail to provide for those who trust in him. And that's exactly what Elijah shows this widow today when he says to her in verses 13 and 14: "Do not fear. Go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake of it and bring it to me, and afterward make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth.'" And that's exactly what happened, Christians. God multiplied that flour and that oil so that she and her family and Elijah had enough bread to eat throughout the whole time of that drought. Because God will not fail to provide for those who trust in him.

And don't you see this happening all throughout the Scriptures too? Think of Jonah, good is dead in the belly of the whale, crying out to the Lord to deliver him! And the Lord brings him out, because God will take care of his own. Think of the three young men--Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego--standing in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, because they refuse to worship his golden idol. God brought them out again, because God will take care of his own. Think of Daniel standing in the lions' den because he refused to listen to the king's law that wanted him to pray to false gods. God brought him out, because God will take care of his own. God will not fail to provide for you, because the future belongs to God!

Now, God is not promising you in all of this these exact miracles to happen. God is not promising you a miracle pantry. He is not promising you that he will deliver you in exactly this way. But what he is promising, Christians, is this: that he will take care of you, no matter what. And even when it seems impossible to you, even when you can't possibly see how, God will provide for you, because the future belongs to God.

And we know this above all, Christians, in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Because Jesus shows us just how much God loves us. God loved us so much that he sent his only Son to die for us, to forgive us our sins, and give us everlasting life. If he loves you that much, Christians, do

you think he is just going to forget about everything else? Do you think he's just going to say, "Well, I gave them Jesus. That's good enough. They're on their own"? Of course not. Jesus shows us that God is indeed with us! And when we know that, Christians, we can say with Paul in Romans 8: "I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." There is nothing, Christians, absolutely nothing in this life that can take us away from God's love! Because he will provide for us, because the future belongs to him.

So Christians, if you are worried about mandates and losing your job, wondering what you're going to have to do if you can't work; if you are worried about your health and what the next couple of months may bring for you; if you are worried about what direction this country is going, stand firm! The Lord is in control. He has all things in his mighty hands, and he will take care of you. Because the future belongs to him. And pray to him, Christians. Pray with all that you have! Give your cares and concerns to the Lord, because when you entrust all these things to him who has all things in his hands, then you can be patient, just like Elijah was. Patient in the face of trouble, patient in the face of uncertainty, patient because you know that God will take care of you, because the future belongs to him.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, though our hearts plan our ways, you are the one who directs our steps. We pray that you would cause us always to trust in you, knowing that you have all things in your hands, and that you will take care of us in your Son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.