

"Others, but Not Me"

Text: 1 Kings 17:8-16

God grant to each of you the wisdom and the honesty to recognize that the law does not only condemn others, it condemns you. But then also to recognize that you are therefore also included in the list of sinners whose debt has been paid in full by Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, there's a difference between stupid and delusional. It would be stupid, for example, to deny that accidents happen, and that people often get hurt. It's *delusional* to try to convince yourself that that sort of thing can never happen to me. Others, but not me. We can convince ourselves that our "Hey y'all, watch this!" will be followed by something truly epic – and successful – with viral video written all over it. *Other people* drink, drive, and get into wrecks or get arrested, but not me. *Other people* try drugs, get addicted, and ruin their lives, but not me. *Other people* marry the wrong person for the wrong reason, devour each other for a time, and then get divorced, but not me. *Others* stop going to church and fall from the faith as a result, but not me.

What about you? Others, but not you? Most of us are probably more that way than we care to admit. Understand this isn't just about the negative things; it also tends to be true when it comes to the positive. Awesome, incredible things happen to others, but not me. God's promises of protection and unfailing love apply to others, but not me. Even to the point that forgiveness is deserved and granted to others, but not me.

This morning we will explore both the negative and positive of that "others" mindset. Our goal here is reality. Our goal is to gain a greater appreciation for, and understanding of, what our God tells us in his Word, and how that Word applies not just to others, but to me.

The text that will guide us this morning is found in the Book of First Kings, the 17th Chapter:

ESV 1 Kings 17:8-16 *Then the word of the LORD came to him (the Prophet Elijah),⁹ "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you."¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink."¹¹ And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."¹² And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only*

a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die."¹³ And Elijah said to her, "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."¹⁴ 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.'"¹⁵ And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days.¹⁶ The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.

This is *God's* word. It is therefore altogether true and right in every way. Focus your hearts and minds on these words this morning, for they are not just God's gifts to others, but to you. To prepare our hearts for the study and individual application of God's Word, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth!"** Amen.

How do you read the miracles recorded in the Bible? Do you read them in sort of a detached way as something that happened long ago to someone else, or do you apply and take comfort from them, personally? Take the miracle described in our text for this morning. Did you hear these words as speaking only of an isolated event that happened toward the end of the Ninth Century BC (almost 3000 years ago) to a man named Elijah and the widow who sheltered him, or did they hold promise, meaning, and comfort also for you?

The honest answer is that we tend to read much of God's Word as that which happened to others. I wonder if Elijah would have had the same attitude if he had heard that this happened to someone else long before he was born. I wonder if Elijah would have reacted with an "others, but not me," – right up until it *was* him.

But that's not fair, is it. This story is about a miraculous intervention by God for a specific purpose, which was to keep Elijah alive until he had completed the work that God had assigned to him. Besides, miracles like that happened in Bible times. Things don't work like that today.

And yet here you and I are, aren't we? How many of you remember times when you weren't exactly sure where the money was going to come from to buy food and feed yourself and your family? And yet here you are. How many of you remember times when you were convinced

that you hadn't the strength to face one more day? And yet here you are. How many of you remember times when you were filled with apprehension and foreboding concerning some dark, unspecified disaster that you felt certain was about to come crashing down on you? And yet here you are.

True, we have no right to hold God to promises that he has never made - which means we have no right to expect God to provide us with a miraculous, never-ending supply of flour and oil as he did for Elijah. But God *has* made promises to us, hasn't he. He promised that he would **"never again curse the ground because of man."** He has promised that he would **"never again strike down every living creature"** as he did in Noah's flood. He has promised that **"while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."** He has promised that if you **"seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness"** he himself will provide everything else that you need – understanding, of course, that it is God who gets to determine what it is that you actually need. And Jesus himself promised **"to be with you always, to the very end of the age."**

And here you are – not just alive but God's adopted children through faith in Jesus Christ.

Clearly then these promises weren't made to nameless and faceless others; they were made to you. And God kept those promises, as has always kept every single one of his promises – to you, to me, to every single human being that has ever walked the earth. When God promises, and whatever he promises, God can be trusted to keep that promise. God, who is truth itself, can do no other.

How then are we supposed to read texts like the one before us this morning? Not as detached observers and certainly not as doubting skeptics. Not when it was God himself who said to us through the Apostle Paul that **"these things took place as examples for us."** (1 Corinthians 10:6) That means that what happened way back when was not only recorded for our benefit (although that would certainly be reason enough to pay attention) those things actually *happened* for our benefit. Note how Paul didn't say, *"These things were written down and preserved for us..."* He said that they **"took place"** for us. Detachment and indifference are thereby excluded.

But then if God hasn't promised to provide us today with a free, never-ending supply of food, how are we supposed to *apply* what is described in our text to our own lives today? First, by using these words to reinforce our own personal conviction that God is fully *capable* of caring

for and providing for every single one of us even in the most impossible circumstances. And that's not just true for others. It's true for me – for you – personally and individually. Second, we rightly apply what we read here when we acknowledge God's *actual* and *extraordinary* provision for us.

We could ask a question here, but we already know the answer: *"Who here can give one example where God failed to provide for one of his children?"* The answer is no one, because, again, God promised that he would. God never lies. God never fails. Instead of looking back at Elijah's day and feeling detached from the fact that he got to eat free, unearned bread and oil for the better part of three years, try looking forward to what we have today from Elijah's perspective. You will recall that in the days prior to his time with the widow and her son, Elijah ate whatever scraps of meat and bread the ravens brought him. Another miracle, to be sure, but would anyone here care to trade places? Which means that you and I actually have it *better*.

That's the message of our text – that God will provide not just for others but for *me*, and that he does so in truly amazing ways. But is that all there is to this text? Undoubtedly not, for we have seen, repeatedly, that God's Word is anything but shallow, superficial, or strictly secular or materialistic. Everything in God's Word points inexorably and ultimately to Christ. How so here?

God kept Elijah, the widow, and her son alive in a most unlikely way and under absolutely impossible conditions. There was no food to be found, and yet they ate and lived. Shift this story from the temporal to the eternal and you will see Christ.

First of all, the work that Elijah had yet to do had nothing to do with Israel itself. It had everything to do with one particular man, born of a Jewish mother, who would not come on the scene for another 850 years. God continued to call the Jews to repentance through his faithful prophets (like Elijah) not because the Jews were better than everyone else (they weren't) but because he had promised to send his Son, the Messiah, through that race.

And Israel survived, by God's miraculous intervention, and you and I are among the personal beneficiaries of God's miraculous preservation of the Jewish race.

As in our text, there were times in history when things looked impossibly dark for mankind, when just a few of the descendants of Israel remained and their survival looked extremely unlikely – but for the fact that God had promised. That was always the ray of hope that found its way through the gathering clouds, wasn't it? *God had promised*. When pagan idols dotted virtually every hilltop in Israel, God's promise remained. When the prophets of Baal and Asherah outnumbered the Prophet of God 850 to 1, God's promises remained. When the northern 10 tribes were carried off by the Assyrians and ceased to exist as a people, God's promises remained. When Judah was virtually annihilated by Babylon and only a tiny remnant survived as exiles, God's promise remained. During the 430 years of silence that followed the last Book of the Old Testament and the last prophet of the Bible, Malachi, God's promises remained.

And then, when he alone determined that the time was just right, ***"God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."*** (Galatians 4:4-5) Obviously there is no greater miracle recorded in all of human history. And yet to whom does this the greatest of all miracles apply? For whom was it performed? Others, but not me?

You and I don't get to provide the answer for that question. The answer is far too important – beyond our pay grade. God himself needs to answer. His is, after all, the only judgment that matters.

Writing to Timothy, God the Holy Spirit dictated this answer through his servant Paul: ***"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."*** Now *that* is a question we can answer. *Am I a sinner?* No doubt whatsoever. But does God's promise of forgiveness include only *other* sinners, but not me? God again in Romans 3: ***"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."*** Note that God's forgiveness can't be for others, but not me, because he told us here that the number of those who have sinned (which is all of us) is the exact same number as those that he has declared to be not guilty of sins (justified) because of the sacrifice of his Son. Here then is God's own proof that no one is excluded from his declaration of forgiveness. Jesus Christ paid the full penalty for every single sinner. Here is divine proof that God's forgiveness wasn't just earned by Jesus for others, it includes you and me. It is yours and mine through faith alone in Jesus Christ.

This then is our promise, our certain answer from God himself. This is why we are to read God's Word not as that written to or about others, but as that which is written to and for *me*. These are *my* promises – from God himself. Will some be condemned on God's great Day of Judgment because they rejected Jesus as their Savior? Tragically, yes, but by God's own promise and grace, *that will be* "others, but not me." Amen.

ESV **Hebrews 9:24-28** For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

ESV **Mark 12:28-34** And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" ²⁹ Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." ³² And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. ³³ And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." ³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

ESV **1 Kings 17:8-16** Then the word of the LORD came to him, ⁹ "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you." ¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Bring me a little water in a vessel, that I may drink." ¹¹ And as she was going to bring it, he called to her and said, "Bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." ¹² And she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I have nothing baked, only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. And now I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die." ¹³ And Elijah said to her, "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. ¹⁴ 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.'" ¹⁵ And she went and did as Elijah said. And she and he and her household ate for many days. ¹⁶ The jar of flour was not spent, neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.



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25th Sunday after Pentecost – November 10, 2024

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 742 (Brown Hymnal)

"Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Epistle Lesson: (Hebrews 9:24-28) The theme for this morning's service is "*Others, but Not Me.*" Every Christian needs to figure out when the phrase applies and is accurate, and when it is not. Our first reading assures us, for example, that Christ died once, for *all* sin. Christ did not therefore pay only for the sins of *others*, he paid for yours and mine too. It is not just others that are forgiven, we are.

Psalm 51 (Supplement page 31) (Brown Hymnal)

The Gospel Lesson: (Mark 12:28-44) Our Gospel lesson reminds us that not only has Jesus paid the sin debt for every human being, every human being had a debt of sin that needed to be paid. Those who deny the terrible weight of their own personal sins see no need for a Savior. In keeping with this morning's theme ("*Others, but Not Me*") we also want to recognize how often *we* break what Jesus here identified as the two great commandments. Jesus is the Savior *we too* desperately needed, not just "others."

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5 (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 762 (Brown Hymnal)

"This Is He"

The Sermon – Text: 1 Kings 17:8-16 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"*Others, but Not Me*"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 755 (Brown Hymnal)

"What Is This Bread"

The Preparation for Holy Communion (Brown Hymnal page 17)

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving (Brown Hymnal page 20)

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 313 (Stanzas 1 & 3) (Red Hymnal)

"O Lord We Praise Thee"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion** – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (37) Average (38)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-6:00 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Frank Gantt has returned the call to Faith of Manchester, MO. The ILC Girls Volleyball team won the school's first ever State Championship on Saturday in Green Bay. Congratulations to players and coaches!

Church Council Meeting Notes – 5 of 6 Council members were present for the meeting on 11/4 (one remotely). Treasurer Mantz reported that offerings for October were \$333 less than budgeted needs and are now \$5,466 below budgeted needs for the year. The General Fund has a negative balance of \$1,847. The 2025 budget is being fine-tuned for presentation to the Voters Assembly at the Annual Meeting on December 8th. Multiple church repair/maintenance projects have been completed with volunteer labor and donated materials. The Council terms of Mick Johnson and Mark Johnson expire at year's end, as well as the Board of Elders term of Phil Pfennig. Mick Johnson and Pastor Roehl will serve as this year's Nominating Committee. Next Council meeting is 12/2 at 6pm.