When Your Brook Runs Dry
Scripture Text: I Kings 17: 1-7

Read Scripture Text: I Kings 17:1-7

P R A Y E R

I n t r o d u c t i o n

Illustration: When I was a boy, our family would travel to Maysville, Oklahoma every summer to spend two weeks with my grandma and grandpa. Usually during our two week stay we would go fishing a day or two in the Washita River near Maysville. I remember one summer, we packed up all our fishing gear and headed to the Washita, only to discover when we got there that the river had completely dried up due to a prolonged drought in Oklahoma.

It was a strange feeling to walk across that dried up, cracked river bed where we had fished so many times in previous years. That day the only sign of life we saw was the rattlesnakes sunning on the river bank and the vultures feasting on the dead fish.

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I have a question for you this morning: Do you ever feel like your “River of Life” has completely dried up?

-Do you ever feel so “dried up” physically, emotionally and spiritually, you can hardly function?

-Do you ever so “dried up” down in the depths of your soul that you lose all your motivation and initiative to do anything?

If you can relate to what I’m talking about you’re not alone. Most all of us goes through times like that sooner or later.
Our scripture text this evening takes us to a “Dried Up River Bed.” And as we study this incident in the Life of the Prophet Elijah, we are going to learn some very valuable lessons that will help us “When Our Own Brook Runs Dry.”

ELIJAH

Unlike most of the other Bible Prophets, the scriptures don’t give us much information about ELIJAH’S background, other than to tell us “he was a Tishbite from Tishbe in Gilead.”

The TISHBITES were “rough, rugged settlers” which would account for Elijah’s “rough, rugged temperament. In many ways, Elijah was “the John the Baptist of the Old Testament.” As a matter-of-fact, if you want to get a mental picture of Elijah, just think of your mental picture of John the Baptist and add about 30-40 years.

Elijah was called by God to be a Prophet in a very difficult time in Israel’s history. For almost three hundred years, the children of Israel had lived under three GREAT KINGS: Saul, David and Solomon.

But after Solomon’s death.................A Civil War broke out in Israel, and the once strong nation was divided into two separate Kingdoms, Judah, the Southern Kingdom.................And Israel, the Northern Kingdom.
The Rulers of the Northern Kingdom were notoriously EVIL MEN, but none as evil as KING AHAB, who was in power when ELIJAH was called to be GOD’S PROPHET.

I KINGS 16: 30 describes AHAB this way: Ahab, son of Omri, did more evil in the eyes of the lord than any of those before him.

As if that weren’t enough............AHAB was married to QUEEN JEZEBEL.................A woman, who’s name has become synonymous with “EVIL.”

Together, this wicked KING and QUEEN turned the people of Israel into worshippers of BAAL and ASHTERAH (female baal). BAAL was supposedly “the god of fertility”.......and in years when the people of Israel reaped abundant harvests, they were to give all the praise and glory to BAAL for his blessings.

Well GOD, who describes himself as “A Jealous God” became very angry over this worship of FALSE gods..............So he decided to teach Ahab, Jezebel and all the People of Israel a very important lesson about WHERE THEIR BLESSINGS TRULY COME FROM.

That is when GOD sent ELIJAH to King Ahab with this message:

VERSE 1 “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except by my word.”
As this terrible drout fell upon the Land of Israel, God instructed ELIJAH where he wanted him to go:

VERSES 3, 4  “Leave here, turn eastward and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you.”

God had prepared a “very special place” for ELIJAH......a place called “the Kerith Ravine.”

That Hebrew name KERITH has an interesting meaning:

KERITH means, “a cut off place” “a place of removal”
   “a place of whittling.”

Most every guy here, and maybe some of you gals too, have “whittled on a stick” at some time or another. When you “whittle” on something, you are reshaping it or reforming it.”

GOD sent ELIJAH to “a place of whittling.”

I want to point out TWO CHARACTERISTICS about this “special place” called “the Kerith Ravine.”

(a) It was a PLACE OF PROTECTION

You notice in VERSE 3 God said to Elijah, “Leave here, turn eastward and HIDE in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan.”

WHY DID GOD SEND ELIJAH TO A PLACE OF HIDING? WHOM DID ELIJAH NEED TO HIDE FROM?

Well for one, he needed to hide from AHAB and JEZEBEL. These two people were extremely wicked and both had very volatile tempers. And we all know there’s nothing that brings out a bad temper like HOT, DRY WEATHER. Sooner or later in the midst of this terrible drought, Ahab and Jezebel are
Sooner or later, in the midst of this terrible drought, Ahab and Jezebel are going to want to “kill the messenger.”

But not only did Elijah need a place of protection from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, he needed a place of protection from the Israelite people.

So when GOD SENT ELIJAH TO THE KERITH RAVINE, He was sending him to a PLACE TO HIDE from Ahab and Jezebel and the Israelite people. IT WAS A PLACE OF PROTECTION.

(b) It was also a PLACE OF PROVISION

verse 4 “You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.”

It was in this “special place” GOD provided WATER for ELIJAH when no one else in the whole land had water. And provided food when no one else had food.

While everyone else was in MISERY......Elijah was comforted.

While everyone else was UNDER GOD JUDGEMENT..........ELIJAH was under God’s blessing.

Don’t miss a very important TRUTH here and that is: No matter how difficult the circumstances may be all around you, GOD TAKES CARE OF HIS CHILDREN!!! GOD is faithful! GOD always provides the needs of those who love him.

Any time it seems as though our whole world is falling apart around us, we must never forget our Heavenly Father will lead us to a place of PROTECTION and PROVISION.
Most commentators agree that ELIJAH spent the first two years of this three and half year drout in this place called the Kerith Ravine.

But over the course of time ELIJAH began to notice something. Look at VERSE 7

_Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land._

Everyday when Elijah put his measuring rod in the water he noticed the water level was lower than it had been the previous day. Day by day Elijah’s water supply was shrinking.........until one day, THE BROOK RAN COMPLETELY DRY!

The Lord gives...........And the Lord takes away! Had God forsaken Elijah? Didn’t God love and care for Elijah any more?

Why Did God Allow the Brook To Run Dry? Let’s consider a couple of valuable truths.

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I. Sometimes God Allows The Brook To Run Dry Because We Trust More in The Brook Than We Do in God.

1. If we aren’t real careful, our human nature will cause us to misplace our faith and trust.
2. One has to wonder if after awhile, ELIJAH’S faith was focused more on that Brook than on God. Perhaps he started trusting in the BLESSING more than the One who provided the blessing.

3. How easy it is for you and me to do the same.

........For 18-20 years you have kids growing up in your home, then they move out and start a life of their own........AND THE BROOK DRIES UP.

........You work for your EMPLOYER 30-40 years of your life, then one day your job is terminated or you retire..........AND THE BROOK DRIES UP.

........You’re MARRIED fifteen, twenty, thirty years or longer.....and little by little “the stream of love” gets smaller and smaller........and one day your mate says, “I want a divorce”............AND THE BROOK DRIES UP.

........Or you spend the biggest part of your life MARRIED to someone and they become your whole life, then one day DEATH TAKES THEM AWAY.........AND THE BROOK DRIES UP.

........For most of your life you have been AS HEALTHY AS A HORSE, then little by little your HEALTH begins to deteriorate AND THE BROOK DRIES UP.

4. Listen to me folks. Sooner or later “the brook WILL dry up!!” Sooner or later, that one thing you have counted on......that one thing that has been your greatest source of security will no longer be in your life.

THEN WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO “WHEN YOUR BROOK DRIES UP?”
5. This is WHY God wants us to PUT ALL OUR FAITH and ALL OUR TRUST in HIM. Because GOD is the one constant in our lives. GOD is the One who will never change.

6. Does God take pleasure in allowing OUR BROOK TO DRY UP? NO!!! But God in His Divine Wisdom knows that as long as we trust in SOMEONE or SOMETHING other than HIM, we will never put ALL OUR FAITH and TRUST IN HIM.

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Secondly......................

II. Sometimes God Allows Our Brook To Dry Up To Move Us To Another Place In Life

1. I want you to notice something very interesting in this story of Elijah. As God was bringing one chapter of Elijah’s life to a close, He was beginning a brand new chapter.

2. God was NOT leaving Elijah “high and dry” in the KERITH RAVINE. Read: VERSES 7-9a

7 Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land.

8 Then the word of the Lord came to him:

9a “Go at once to Zaraphath of Sidon and stay there.”
3. Now I want you to notice GOD had already taken care of ELIJAH’S provisions before he ever arrived at Zarapheth.

READ: **VERSES 9b-11**

4. God allowed the Brook at Kerith to dry up in order to move Elijah to another place of service and a new level of faith.

God never sends us anywhere, but what he doesn’t supply all we need.

- At the Brook of Kerith, God supplied WATER from the brook and FOOD from the ravens.

- Now God has moved Elijah to Zarapheth, and his WATER and FOOD is being supplied by of all people, a WIDOW WOMAN, who has no source of income, a woman who is single-handedly raising her only son and FOOD is being supplied by of all people............A woman, who has no source of income, who is single-handedly raising her only son, A woman who is down to her very last morsel of bread A woman whose need is even greater than ELIJAH’S.

5. But as the rest of this story unfolds, we get a clearer picture of why God moved Elijah to Zaraphath and didn’t allow him to stay in the “comfort of the Brook Kerith.”

6. As an act of sacrifice, the widow woman did as Elijah had commanded her. She made a cake of bread for Elijah out of the last bit of meal she had.....She literally took food out of her own mouth and the mouth of her son and gave it to THE MAN OF GOD.

As a result, GOD blessed the widow with an ample food supply to feed herself, her son, and Elijah for the remaining year and a half of the drought.
7. But something even more remarkable happened. Sometime later, the widow's son became very ill and died. Through the Power of God, Elijah resurrected the boy back to life and gave him to his mother.

*What if Elijah had still been back at the Brook Kerith?

*What if Elijah had not been where God wanted him to be?

Indeed this story would have had a tragic ending.

8. You and I may not always understand why “our brook has to dry up.” We may not understand why a loved one has to be taken out of our life or why an important part of our life has to come to an end.

But just as it was with ELIJAH, we must learn to trust that GOD, in His infinite wisdom, always knows what is best.

Conclusion

The story is told about a CHRISTIAN BLACKSMITH who lived in the 1800’s.

One day a non-believer asked the BLACKSMITH............"Why is it you have so much trouble?” “Ever since you became a Christian I’ve been watching you and it seems like the harder you have tried to live for the Lord, you seem to have twice as many troubles as you had before.”

The blacksmith thought for a moment, then said, “You see this piece of iron?” I’ve been TEMPERING it for some time. To do that I have to get the iron RED-hot, then PLUNGE it into this TUB OF ICE WATER. I have to do that many times.
If it turns out the PIECE OF IRON can take that tempering, I will heat it again and hammer it unmercifully.

I went through a lot of pieces of iron to find this one. The others were too brittle and I threw them in the scrap pile. Those scraps are only worth one-cent a pound. But the CARRIAGE that I will make from this piece of IRON will be worth A THOUSAND TIMES THAT MUCH!

The point is this: God can use the man or woman who is willing to be “tempered by the trials of life.”

Maybe tonight, your “brook has dried up.”

Perhaps someone or something that once was such a source of strength and comfort to you has been taken away.

When the brook dries up, GOD doesn’t want us to sit by the “dried up brook” the rest of our lives. But rather He desires that we move on to a new place of blessing and a new level of FAITH and TRUST in HIM.