



From Pastor Mike

I am excited about our Lenten worship this year because we will be gathered up in Jesus! Let me explain.

Lent is a time of self-reflection and sacrifice leading us to repent of our sin as we align our lives more closely with God's will. That is challenging work, but the good news is that we do this as the body of Christ together.

Someone recently said to me that the last two years have seemed like an extended period of Lent. As we talked, I understood her point. We have all made sacrifices. We have had time alone with our thoughts to reflect on our relationship with Christ. There are things we might have done differently if we had a crystal ball, but that is in the past. Now we look forward to Ash Wednesday, Lent, and Holy Week.

The pandemic has taught us that we have no idea what tomorrow may bring. We only have today. Each day we strive to live our lives as a gift to God who promises to watch over us in this world and the next. We cannot face the challenges of this world without the Holy Spirit. We know that when we draw our last breath, God will restore us to glory in the eternal Kingdom.

God is not like a rabbit's foot or another lucky charm. God does not shield us from the pain and suffering of life in this world, but God never abandons us, never leaves us to our own devices. It is His love, mercy and grace which gives us the strength to proclaim "God is Good! All the Time!" even when all evidence suggests otherwise.

The season of Lent is essential for those who truly seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We hope you will join us as we gather up with Jesus and walk the path to Good Friday and Easter together.

Lenten Worship Sermon Series: Gathered Up in Jesus!

Ash Wednesday, March 2, 2022, at 7:00pm - "Piety Practice" (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21)

First Sunday in Lent, March 6, 2022 - "An Opportune Time" (Luke 4:1-13)

Second Sunday in Lent, March 13, 2022 - "Under the Wings" (Luke 13:31-35)

Third Sunday in Lent, March 20, 2022 - "If It Bears Fruit" (Luke 13:1-9)

Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 27, 2022 - "Lost and Found" (Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32)

Fifth Sunday in Lent, April 3, 2022 - "Filled with the Fragrance" (John 12:1-8)

Palm/Passion Sunday, April 10, 2022 - "The Lord Needs It" (Luke 19:28-40)

Beginning on Wednesday, March 9th, I will also lead a six-week Lenten Bible Study with the book "The Passion Play: Living the Story of Christ's Last Days". Author and Pastor Rob Fuquay follows the biblical story of the Passion and how it has been experienced through the centuries against the backdrop of this amazing play which takes place in Oberammergau, Bavaria, Germany every 10 years. The play is a staging of Jesus' Passion story, covering the final period of his life from his visit to Jerusalem to the journey to the cross. In his new book and study. The class will be taught each Wednesday at 1:00pm and 7:00pm.

COVID-19 infections are dropping and while current evidence suggests it will continue to drop, we have no idea what will happen tomorrow or next week, but we do know that Christ is with us. That is something to be excited about.

I hope you will join me for the discipline of Lent as we are gathered up in Jesus

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Mike



Souper Bowl of Caring 2022

**Our Souper Bowl of Caring
this year was a huge
success!**

**There was great food,
friendly competition,
and great fellowship!**



**287 pounds of food and
\$216 was donated to
the Verona Food Pantry**

***Thanks to everyone
who helped make this
event a memorable
one for 2022!***





The following are the minutes from the **FEBRUARY** meeting of the Church Council. The minutes are available for you to help the entire church family *Stay In The Know* about how this group is caring for New Hope UMC!

Church Council Meeting Minutes - January 27, 2022

Present: Kevin Armstrong, Bianca Brensinger, Mitch Breninger, Alicia Copeland, Cindy Deavers, Pastor Mike, Cindy Sheets, Jennifer Strother, Dallas VanLear and Karen Whitmer

The meeting was called to order by chairman Dallas VanLear, with devotions and prayer by Kevin.

The minutes from the January meeting were accepted as distributed.

Finance Report: *(Kevin Armstrong reported)*

- Reports are not up-to-date.
- We are \$1,599 short and we missed a week due to the bad weather.
- Kevin recommends that we pay our normal apportionments for this month.
- Audits have been sent out to the committee chairpersons.
- We are in need of someone to do the church-wide audit for the year. If anyone is interested please see Kevin. It should only take about an hour or so to complete.

- Kevin stated that we need to start observing the following protocol again throughout the church, whenever we take up money for special events...
 - 2 people need to collect and count the money, then they need to sign and date a sheet of paper that states the amount that they counted. Then they need to put all of that in an envelope and then put it in the collection plate. This will ensure that we have standard checks and balances of our collected monies and there will be no reason for any issues that may arise.

- Samantha Brensinger, Cindy Sheets, and others are working on transferring names on the youth designated banking account at Dupont CCU.

Treasurer's Report: *(Cindy Deavers reported)*

- The reports are current as of 2/22/22.
- The giving for February that was not recorded as of that date is \$9,498.75.
- Payroll has not been done on the most recent treasurer's report.
- Last month we paid 75% of conference apportionments and 100% of district apportionments as recommended.

Trustees: *(Mitch Brensinger reported)*

~ Next meeting is March 10th at 6:30pm.

Pastor's Report: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- We will have an Ash Wednesday Service on Wednesday, March 2nd at 7:00pm.
- We will not have a Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper this year.
- The Lenten Bible Study is going to start on Wednesday, March 9th. There will be classes at 1:00pm and 7:00pm. It is a 6-week bible study focusing on the Passion of Christ. If you are interested in attending, please see Pastor Mike.
- Pastor Mike made a motion to nominate Bill Lala as a member of the Trustees, class of 2024. Kevin seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously.
- There is still one more trustee position to fill and several more positions on the Staff/Parish Relations Committee. If anyone is interested in serving on either of these committees, please contact Pastor Mike.

Worship: *(Pastor Mike reported)*

- Mike is working on getting lay readers and acolytes to participate in the Sunday Worship Service again.

Evangelism: *(report from Nathan Kutz)*

- Will be starting a Socks and Underwear Drive for the Valley Mission. We are going to talk about options to not only have donations from inside the church, but to try to get donations from outside as well. This drive will last for a few weeks and we will organize dates for approval soon. These items are the Missions biggest need.

United Methodist Men: *(Dallas Van Lear reported)*

- The UMM met last week. The planning committee met afterward. A good meal was served by the UMW. Dr. Larson from Grace Christian School presented a good program, and we thank Corey Johnson for setting that up.

United Methodist Women: *(report from Wanda Harding)*

- March 1, 2022 @ 1:30pm - Sisters of Faith meeting at church
- March 7, 2022 @ 7:00pm - Circle of Hope meeting at church
- March 8, 2022 @ 7:00pm - Circle of Love meeting at church
- March 17, 2022 @ 6:30pm - Circle of Love will serve the meal to for the UMM
- March 21, 2022 @ 6:30pm - United Methodist Women's meeting at church

District UMW News

Saturday, March 12th, from 9:00am to 1:00pm the District UMW Spiritual Life Retreat will be held at St. James UMC with guest speaker Rev. Ashley Isernhagen, a pastor at St. James. The program entitled *"Healing, Wholeness and Joy in our Journey to God."* Registration is due March 6th. Please see Wanda for registration. There is no registration fee. And a free-will offering will be taken to cover the expenses and lunch.

Membership: *(Karen Whitmer reported)*

- Mark Bryant, a member of our church, died on January 9. 2022.

Lay Leader: *(Jennifer Strother reported)*

- The Baby Bottle Campaign will end on March 27th. Please bring your filled bottles back in by that date.

Youth: *(Bianca Brensinger reported)*

- 287 lbs of food was delivered to the Verona Food Pantry on February 22nd. And \$216 in cash was also collected and will be given to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank.
- The youth will be making peanut butter easter eggs this year to help raise money for their upcoming missions and projects. They will start taking pre-orders now, and they will be making the eggs on April 2nd, which will be ready for pick up on Sunday, April 3rd. One large egg will be \$4.00 or you can get 6 small eggs for \$4.00

Communications: *(Cindy Sheets reported)*

- Working on making some written instructions for how to come in and run the a/v room. For anyone that wants to learn the a/v room or who needs a refresher. Hope to have those posted by the end of March.
- Looked into the cost of additional handheld and desktop microphones to help solve some of our audio problems. It was suggested that we look up the price of microphones that hang from the ceiling to be installed over each side of the congregation.
- We are in hopes to get the 50's Drive-In going again this year. There are a lot of people who are interested in getting this youth-led event back up and running, but we will need the help of the entire church for volunteers and donations. We will be going around to get a feel of how the majority of the church feels about restarting this event. Also, we have plans on how the event may look a little different this year, based on what our Covid issues may be in the fall. We are hoping to hold this event sometime in September.

Dallas ended the meeting by thanking everyone and wishing them a safe drive home.

Mike sent us off with prayer.

The meeting ended at 7:06pm.

Respectfully submitted by:
Cynthia Sheets
Recording Secretary

The next Church Council Meeting will be on Thursday, March 24th, 2022 at 6:30pm.

Homemade Peanut Butter Easter Eggs for Sale

Made by our Youth group

1 Large Egg ~ \$4.00

or

6 Small eggs ~ \$4.00

***Please contact
Samantha Brensinger
for details.***



Just For Laughs

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Thanks to Dad Hengeveld 03-11-2004

THE DEVIL MAY BE THE FATHER OF ALL LIES, BUT THIS SCALE IS THE UNCLE

What Price a Sermon?

One beautiful Sunday morning, Reverend Barnard announces to his congregation, 'My good people, I have here in my hands three sermons.....

A \$100 sermon that lasts five minutes

A \$50 sermon that lasts fifteen minutes

And a \$20 sermon that lasts a full hour.

Now, we'll take the collection and see which one I'll deliver.'

What do we have that Adam never had?

Ancestors.

Who was the smartest man in the Bible?

Abraham. He knew a Lot.

Which Bible character had no parents?

Joshua, son of Nun

On the Ark, Noah probably got milk from the cows. What did he get from the ducks?

Quackers.

How do you make Holy Water?

You take some regular water and boil the devil out of it.





Birthdays & Anniversaries

1 - Chloe Breeding

2 - Derek Deavers

3  - Lynn & David Dively

5 - Christy Riner Powell
- Chris Bosserman
- John Michael DeJong

 Mitch & Samatha Brensinger


8 - John Morse
- Steve Meier
- Tina Bosserman

10 - Janice Bell
- Peggy Caricofe

11 - Emerson Gunsalus

12 - Fred Arndt
- Emily Critzer
- Katelyn & Lily McLaughlin

13 - Blake McKibbin
- Tanya Keys
- Mary Ann Marks
- Sandra Puffenberger

 - Vanessa & Berkeley Harner

14 - Noah Hong

15 - Wayne Brensinger

 - Nora & Charles Darrah

16 - Landon Powell
- Chelsea Steele

17 - Amanda Barr
- Erica Miller
- Ricky Morris

18 - Blake Fretwell
- Shane McCray
- Ethan Herman

19 - Kevin Armstrong
- Randy Craig

22 - Lucy Black
- Nicholas Bergman

24 - Dolly Harner

25 - Helen Morse

26 - Hailey Hong
- Roxann Canipe
- Roger Layman

27 - Doug Gunsalus

28 - Gail Armstrong
- Joshua Corbin

29 - Glenwood Fretwell
- Tyler Fretwell
- Josh Massie

30 - Michelle Booth

When God Doesn't Heal

“And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:32-40 ESV

“It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:7-11 ESV

I hope this month finds all of our readers well. And if not then I believe this article will greatly help you. For many reasons this entire month, this has been on my mind. I want to preface this by saying this may be longer than previous things we have written. But it is for a good reason. To some Christians, some statements I make could be offensive. I don't mean them to be, however, I have observed in my life that many people who are fired up for God or have walked away from God or refuse to believe in God are often confused by the problem of pain. All of my life I have watched this as well as lived it myself. What I firmly believe is it is a mark of the work of Satan against the church. Bible-literate Christians will know that Paul talks about Satan's servants doing such things. I believe they take advantage of the Bible illiterate Christians. We see it today as we should only see blessings and no curses. We should only experience good and not bad. Every time something is wrong all we have to do is speak to it and it will be okay, everything will be just fine. Whether it is sickness, a bad situation, or anything we would look at as uncomfortable or evil, just name it and claim it! Speak to it and if something doesn't happen then your faith is weak or the problem is you in some way. You haven't prayed hard enough, you're not holy enough, you haven't done enough for God. Something is completely wrong with you because you're not working hard enough for God's deliverance! All of that is in a complete Christian life, but that's not why something isn't changing. This creates a terrible process that causes doubt and confusion and can ultimately lead to atheism if taken far enough. It actually creates the delusion that the word of God, the name of The Son of God is simply a formula, to create your best life now, to enter the kingdom of God without striving for it. That if you rub your Bible the right way you will get exactly what you want out of it. That if you speak the name of Jesus Christ just right everything will go your way and all trouble and discomfort, pain, and sadness will be avoided. While comparing that with many unbiblical practices and groups could be done here, my point is that these views distort the entire objective of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I believe it's been to our peril. I know not all churches today give that impression, but sadly it does exist, and souls have been misled by it. Even if it's not your stated belief, I feel like the exposure of our “have it all right now lifestyles” have influenced how we interpret and live our faith.

I believe that our modern lifestyle that started in the last 120 years has made us grow impatient with God's plans. What used to be a day's walk is now a 30-minute drive. A family meal used to take several hours to make, now it can be picked up 20 minutes after ordering. Coffee at one time was percolated and now with a Keurig takes less than two minutes. A garden that we

tilled or plowed and after much care produced our food, is now avoided and we can get all of the same food with a 10 minute trip to the grocery store. My point is that things have become so easy, and our lives are now perfect Disney stories. Fantasies have become reality, millions can be made without physical work, love as a picture no longer takes a lifetime to paint. Pain is something we are no longer trained to handle and danger is something we no longer face. Modern life keeps us from monsters and beasts of old, now our capacity to fight no longer lives. If we no longer know how to fight then we are not able to effectively handle real-life issues that still exist today. The real pain of people who have been damaged by their sin or that of others we can't battle. People lose confidence in the gospel of Christ and it's no longer revered as the only salvation because we who claim to believe it don't live as if we do. All of this I think has been influenced by us forgetting that God told Adam that he would work with labor and when he ate his food it would be from the sweat of his work. Life takes endurance, grit, sweat, tears and blood to enjoy good fruits and so does our walk with Almighty God.

In the above passages, there is enough material to write a year's worth of articles on and yet they honestly speak for themselves. The people described in these passages and all throughout scripture are our true examples of how to praise God when he doesn't heal. From Job and the day that he lost everything to Uriah who carried his own death sentence from David to Joab. From Moses who God's plan was not to fix his mouth in speaking to pharaoh but chose to give him his brother Aaron as his speaker to Stephen who endured being stoned to death. From Christ our Savior who endured the cross for all of our sins to Paul who endured all of his sufferings so that all of us who are gentiles could come to know the love and mercy and grace of Almighty God. Yes, there are stories where temporary things are healed and fixed. But honestly, if you add them up throughout all scripture stories of painful endurance outweigh those of miraculous healing of temporary things. Instead what you see are a multitude of stories of those who endured for the promises of God to show that in the midst of all suffering that a deeper healing begins to occur.

In dealing with my own sufferings in life as well as observing others, I have come to see that so many things in my life that at one time made me doubt God. Things that shook and crumbled my foundation have actually led to miraculous understandings and have helped others. God works all things for our good. What we think is so horrible and terrible in our small view of the world is actually a glorious puzzle piece in God's divine master plan. God is not a puzzle that we buy at the store and piece together within a month. At the end of a lifetime of education and study of theology, the greatest of us will only scratch the surface of who God truly is. I believe that there is only a perfect will of God. I believe that our God is a perfect God and as he told Moses he makes people mute, deaf, and blind. I believe what God said when he spoke through the prophet Isaiah to King Cyrus that he alone makes light and darkness, makes success and creates disaster that he the Lord does all these things. I believe that he is the beginning and the end even when my small view of things is all that I can see.

I myself am guilty of falling into the temptation of letting my own pride taint my view of our blessed heavenly Father. It is I who in my own sufferings have said this is not fair what is the meaning of all of this. I have committed this sin. Yes, I do believe that it is a sin because I believe it is a mark of our own human pride that ever since the garden of Eden continually makes us think we have a better idea than God. It continually makes us think that the bible is not enough. That our own ideas that are simply like raindrops that evaporate are better. Without Christ, our pride continually fools us into thinking we alone can save ourselves and the world with our own works. It is our pride that causes us to be like Cain and Saul and many others who offered God what they wanted to give him instead of giving him what he wanted them to give him. No matter what this life throws at us we are supposed to glorify God and give him what pleases him every day. This in the middle of our suffering is what brings him true Glory.

So I would like to say to you as much as this life can hurt when you experience things you do not deserve and when your sickness is not healed. Keep your faith in Jesus Christ, don't let your pride make you think that your plan is bigger than his. Like he said to Job, where were we when he laid the foundations of the earth? Seek peace with God in the midst of your suffering. Let God use your suffering to mold you and make you after his will. Maybe your suffering will bring salvation to souls. Things are tested in adversity. It is through your trials that

you are made strong and through your weaknesses that the strength of Jesus Christ shows. If I may quote Horatio Spafford when he wrote,

*“When peace, like a river,
Attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot,
Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.”*

I hope that after reading this and if you're walking through hell on Earth you can say it is well with my soul. That when God chooses not to heal, that you will want to understand the more excellent path. He endured the cross for us so let us endure this life for him. Then and only then when we bear our burdens and we turn our eyes upon Jesus will we show this world true meaning. Then maybe they will look at us Christians as ones to be followed instead of ones to laugh at and not take seriously. I encourage you to carry the weight of your trials and sicknesses in strength and to show the world that it's not you who is carrying your burdens, but Christ in you. To show them his perfect will.

Thank you and we pray that all of you are blessed,
Nathan & Cheryl Kutz
Real Life Heavenly Hands

Sermons By Phone

**Hear
Pastor Mike's
Weekly
Sermon**



1-877-369-1437

New Hope United Methodist Church –
United Methodist Men (UMM)

Minutes from the meeting on
February 17, 2022



President Kim Maugans conducted the meeting. There were 14 members and 1 guest present. Mitch Brensinger, Jim Davis, Darryl Deavers, Jeff Hitt, Corey Johnson, Jarman Fretwell, Kenny Fretwell, Bill Lalla, Kim Maugans, John Morse, Pastor Mike Reaves, Bruce Rogers, Jack Walker and Dallas VanLear.

Devotions were provided by Kim Maugans. A wonderful meal was served by the Circle of Hope.

PROGRAM: The program was presented by Dr. Donald Larson, PHD, Head of School for Grace Christian School in Staunton. He spoke on the benefits of a Christian-based educational program and the mission of GCS to assist Christian parents by providing a sound academic education in a Christ-centered environment. They currently have 345 students in Pre-K thru 12th Grade. Average class size 12-15 students.

MINUTES: The minutes for the last scheduled meeting on November 18, 2021 had been sent to all members for their review. There being no questions, the minutes were approved as submitted.

TREASURER'S REPORT: The Treasurer's Report was given by Kenny Fretwell. It includes a summary balance sheet for 2021 and a current balance sheet with all expenses and revenue since our last meeting.

A copy of his report is part of these minutes.

| | |
|----------|--------------------|
| Checking | \$ 824.27 |
| Savings | <u>\$ 2,224.35</u> |
| Total | \$ 3,048.64 |

OLD BUSINESS:

- Corey Johnson will continue to develop programs of interest to our members.
- The Revenue Committee of Jack Walker, Bill Lalla, Darryl Deavers and Kim Maugans has not met since our last meeting. The Committee wants to include representatives from the UMW because any events will probably need to include the women of the church. Kim has mentioned the idea to Susan Mehler and she agrees the UMW should be involved. The Committee will meet in the coming weeks.

NEW BUSINESS:

- There was no new business to be discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned after a prayer by Pastor Mike Reaves.

Respectfully prepared and submitted by Bruce Rogers, Secretary.

NEXT MEETING: 6:30 PM, Thursday, March 17, 2022.

Kids' Corner ~ Elijah's Prayer

By: Sharla Guenther



This story is about a prophet named Elijah. Elijah was a regular man who made mistakes, who was afraid sometimes, yet when it really mattered he trusted God. Elijah did amazing things with God's help and God did amazing things for Elijah.

A few things you should know before we start the story is that the land of Israel where Elijah was going was very evil. There was a king named Ahab who believed in a god named Baal (the weather god). He and most of the people worshiped this god and did many things that the Bible says we shouldn't do.

King Ahab also had a wife named Jezebel. The king and his wife both came from very evil families. Together they helped make Israel a place that God did not like. That's why God sent Elijah, he would show the people that God was more powerful and the one they should be worshiping instead.

It all started when Elijah was told by God to deliver a message to King Ahab. Elijah went to Ahab and told him, "My God has told

me that there will be no rain or even dew in the next three years until I tell it to." I'm going to guess that Ahab didn't believe

this would happen because he worshiped Baal who was the lord of the weather and he should've been able to give rain whenever the people prayed for it.

Now just think for a second if you had no rain, snow, or even dew for three years. Rivers and lakes would get very small or dry up completely. Since that's where we get our water from we probably wouldn't be able to have baths or flush toilets anymore. Getting a drink of water wouldn't be as easy anymore, we might only be allowed to have one cup of water a day.

After Elijah told King Ahab what would happen the Lord told Elijah to go and hide. And while there would be no rain and not much food in the land, God made sure Elijah had what he needed. He stayed by a brook where there was water for him to drink and a type of bird called the raven, brought him bread and meat for breakfast and supper every day. Neat, huh?!

After some time passed, the brook that Elijah was drinking from dried up and there was no more water to drink. So God told Elijah to go to a place called Zarephath, there he would find a lady who would give him food and water to drink.

So Elijah trusted God and did just what he said. When Elijah got to the entrance of the town he saw a woman there gathering wood. He asked her, "Would you please bring me a little water in a cup so I can drink and a small piece of bread?"

She replied, "I believe in God as you do, but I don't have any bread to eat, just a small amount of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I was just going to go home and make the rest of the food for me and my son and then we will probably die because we will have no food left."

Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go home and make the food for you and your son, but first make a small loaf of bread for me, and bring it to me. The Lord has told me that if you do this your jar of flour will never go empty and the jug of oil will not go dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land."

So, she went home and did as Elijah had told her, and everyday there was food for Elijah, the woman and her son. Imagine trying to empty a glass of water and it never goes empty. This was another of God's amazing miracles.

Everything was going fine until the woman's son got sick and died. She went to Elijah for help, she thought God was punishing her for all the mistakes she had made. So Elijah rushed over to her house and said, "Give me your son." He took the boy in his arms to the room upstairs where he was staying. Then he cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, please let this boy live again!"

Elijah spread his hands over the boy and cried out to God like this three times. The Lord heard his cry and the boy began to breathe. Elijah picked up the boy and took him back downstairs to his mother and said, "Look, God answered my prayer, your son is alive!"

As the woman hugged and kissed her son she said to Elijah, "Thank-you! I know that the Lord is with you and whatever you say is true."

Now, if you think that is a cool story, that's only the first half! God has much more in store for Elijah. Elijah still has to show the people of Israel, King Ahab and Jezebel that Baal isn't God. Elijah doesn't know how he's going to do this, but God has it all planned out.

Over three years had gone by without a drop of water from the sky. Animals were starting to die because they had no water or food. Also during this time, the evil Jezebel was trying to get rid of all the prophets of God like Elijah (a prophet is like a mailman, they send messages from God so we can know what he wants us to do). What Jezebel didn't know was that one of the king's servants named Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace, was hiding the Lord's prophets in caves to keep them safe.

God spoke to Elijah and told him, "Go to Ahab and I will send rain." So Elijah went to find Ahab. When Ahab was told that Elijah wanted to see him he said in an angry voice, "Is that you Elijah, the troublemaker of Israel?"

Elijah quickly replied, "I am not the troublemaker. First your father and now you have disobeyed God over and over again. You stopped following his commandments and have followed Baal. Now send for all the people of Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. Bring all the prophets of Baal and the false prophets of Jezebel."

None of us should disobey God, but God was especially mad because Ahab and his father were both kings. Kings had a lot of responsibility like presidents and prime ministers. They made laws and people listened to them, and when the King and Jezebel ruled Israel they didn't worship God they worshipped Baal, and unfortunately, a lot of the people turned to Baal as they did.

All the people gathered on Mount Carmel. Elijah stood before the people and said, "How long will you keep changing your mind? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." The people just stood there and said nothing.

Then Elijah said to them, "This is what we're going to do. I am the only prophet of the Lord left and Baal has over four hundred. Get two bulls, let them choose the one they want and I will take the other one. Cut it up and place it on wood, but do not start the wood on fire. I will do the same. Then you call out to Baal and I will call out to the Lord. The god who listens and starts the fire is the real God."

All the people nodded and agreed. So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Get a head start and get your bull ready first. Call on Baal, but do not start the fire yourself." So they picked the best bull and set it on the wood. Then they began calling on Baal to start the fire. They shouted and danced around the altar yelling to Baal to start the fire. They shouted and shouted from morning till noon with no answer.

Around noon Elijah was getting bored but he said to the prophets of Baal, "Maybe you're not shouting loud enough. Maybe your god is busy or sleeping and he can't hear you, you better shout louder." So some of the people ran around screaming to Baal, others were bowing and crying to Baal. They just couldn't seem to do enough, but nothing happened.

The people who believed in Baal had done this all day long and they were very tired. Finally, Elijah called the people over to his altar. He began to make his altar. He took some stones and put them around his altar. Then he built a trench around his altar to hold about a bathtub full of water. Then Elijah did something very strange. He asked the people to pour water over his bull, the wood and enough water to fill the trenches below the altar.

How was God going to start a fire when the whole altar was soaking wet? The people started to giggle and thought for sure that Elijah's God would never be able to start a fire now.

After the entire altar was completely soaked Elijah stepped forward and simply prayed: "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, show us today that you are the real God of Israel and that all I have done is obeyed you. Answer me Lord, so that these people can believe in you once again."

Just as Elijah finished his prayer and everyone stood silently watching, fire burst out of the altar and everything was covered in flames. Every single thing was burnt down to nothing, and all the water was gone. As the people watched completely amazed they began to fall on their knees and cry out, "The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is the real God!"


Then all the prophets of Baal were taken away and Elijah told Ahab to watch because now that the people didn't worship Baal anymore, the Lord would let it rain.

Then Elijah went back to Mount Carmel and prayed to God that the curse would be over and that rain would come. While he was praying he asked his servant to go look towards the sea for a rain cloud. The servant came back and said, "There is nothing in the sky Elijah."

Elijah asked him seven times to keep looking, and the seventh time the servant came back and said, "This time when I went to look there was a very small cloud, as small as a man's fist coming this way."

Elijah said to the servant, "Run to Ahab and tell him if he wants to get to his palace in Jezreel he'll have to leave now, the rain is coming."

Meanwhile, the little cloud grew bigger and bigger and the sky got darker and darker. The wind started to blow and it began to pour and pour and pour... and the drought was over.



If you would like to add an article or announcement to the Hilltopper, please contact us! Call/Text: (540) 280-1860 or NewHopeUMC.Virginia@gmail.com

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