

# The True God who gives true life (part 3)

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 10 August 2025

Preacher: James Ross

[ 0 : 00 ] So the big idea for us today, the big thing that this woman has been learning, the big thing! that this story of Elijah has been leading us towards is this. When you and I come to know! the God who brings life from death, then we know who to trust and never to shift from.

Because it's true that in any time of trial and testing, we will instinctively find ourselves looking for a Savior. We will be turning somewhere to find help. And we are being reminded in this story that turning to the God of life and love, that makes all the difference in the world.

Those other things that we can be tempted to rely on, like money that we thought about this morning, perhaps our intelligence or our position, our possessions or some other person, we know, don't we, that each of those has their limits. There will be a point where they are not able to help, and especially at the point of our death. And so wonderfully woven into the storyline of the Bible, we are invited to discover the uniqueness of our God. I am God, and there is no other. And to recognize that this is the God who gives life. We're invited to see here is the Redeemer we need. Here is Jesus, the Son of God, declaring, I am the resurrection and the life.

And again, woven throughout the pages of the Bible and woven into our life stories is the reality that if we are followers of Jesus, our faith will be tested. And it's so important in those times of testing that we bring what we know about God into that new experience, that new circumstance.

So Elijah and the widow have been discovering again certain realities about God that they need to apply into this new situation of testing. Because as I said at the beginning, this is part three of the story of the living God who gives true life, of the God who is showing Himself to be greater than Baal, the God who is greater than any false God who could be created. It is God alone we have seen who's in charge of the weather and the crops. It's God alone who can provide by miracle in order to sustain a prophet and a widow and a widow's family. And here as we come to the climax, God alone provides life in the place of death. And this is a lesson that the widow discovers joyfully firsthand.

[ 3 : 02 ] But think about the first readers of this book, exiles, because they've wandered away from God. What are they invited to learn? What are we invited to learn? That we should turn to the God who is able to bring life in place of death and never go anywhere else. So as we follow this story, two simple things that we're going to think about. We'll think about the narrative. We'll see this movement. It's a familiar Bible movement from tragedy to triumph. And then we'll think about verse 24 and her testimony to truth. And as we do that, we'll aim to learn some lessons about faith along the way, vital lessons for your faith and mine, so that we might have the kind of confidence that we hear expressed by the women in verse 24. Now I know that you are a man of God and the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth, that we would know Jesus is Lord, that we would know He is the one and only Savior, to lean on, that we would rest and rejoice in Him. So let's think first of all about the story that tragedy leads to triumph, but it does that through a course of testing, which we see.

And again, that's a theme. When you think about some of the most famous stories in the Bible, think about faithful Abraham. You know, he is called to exercise faith all through his life, given promises, and then has to wait for decades. And the climax of Abraham's life of faith is a time of intense testing. Take your son, your only son, and offer him as a sacrifice.

And Abraham is willing to obey. And of course, we know that God intervenes and gives him his son back and reaffirms his blessing. We're going to see in a couple of weeks, Elijah moving from this great test of faith, where he has to stand on a mountain confronted by the prophets of Baal, and he has to show that his God is the one true and living God, and call Israel back to himself. And there's that high point followed by the immediate low, where Jezebel wants to have him killed.

And again, as his faith is tested, God is there, and God brings him to this place where he will reveal himself, and he will speak, and he will show Elijah that there is hope. The widow's story reminds us in the same way that our faith in God, it will be tested, that we have exercised for Christians' faith in the past. But with every new day and every new situation, we need to pray again, we need to obey again, we need to trust again. For the widow, so we saw this last week, she's exercised great faith. Remember, we saw her gathering up the last couple of sticks. She's got her last few drops of flour and oil, and she's going to make one last meal. But she has to have faith to give that meal first to Elijah, trusting then that God will provide for her and for her family. And she had that wonderful discovery that where she expected death through starvation, actually life came. But now what's happened in her story? Her son has become ill and has died. Death comes, and life and peace are shattered, and she is thrust into the most intense test of her faith. Her response is significant. Where does she go?

[ 6 : 54 ] Notice she goes to the man of God. She speaks to Elijah, what do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son? So, she understands at a fundamental level, it's pointless to talk to Baal, because Baal is a non-thing. She knows that God is the God who gives life and who takes it. And so, what she does is she pours out her heart to the Lord, as we're invited to do.

Psalms 63. And we hear the heartbreak, don't we, in her questioning. Elijah, is it the case that my son has died? Has God taken him in payment for something that I have done? Has he died for my sin? And of course, we come to discover the answer is no. And in God's redemption story, we understand the answer is no. But we know wonderfully, God's son will pay the price required to deal with the sin that we have committed. So, the woman has prayed. She's spoken to Elijah, and then Elijah acts. And again, we've seen Elijah, the man of faith and prayer, and here we see him again. Give me your son, he replied. And he took him, carried him to the upper room, and then he prays, Lord, my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with by causing her son to die.

Here is a prophet, here is a man of God, a spokesman, one sent by God to this widow's family. And we get that sense from Elijah that here is a man who is moved with compassion. Here is a man who enters into this widow's grief, just like the great prophet Jesus, angered as he stood in front of the grave of his friend Lazarus, angry at that great enemy death. I wonder if you noticed the difference in how each spoke. Elijah, when you get to verse 21, prays to the Lord, Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him. Here's great faith, asking God to do a miracle and to give life. But he prays to God, knowing that Elijah's an authority,

God does. Did you notice that Jesus spoke directly? Lazarus, come out. He is a prophet, but he is also God with authority, the one who gave life in place of death. Elijah's prayer is really significant, I think. Helps us to see one or two different things about Elijah and about our God. First of all, when you listen to Elijah's prayer in verse 20, perhaps we are reminded of another prayer, a prayer of Moses. And in both, we have a concern for God's glory. So, in this case, Elijah wants the widow and wants everyone around to know that only God is the Lord of life and that he doesn't fail his people. And so, he's really concerned for God's honor in this moment. Remember the prayer of Moses after the people made the golden calf, after they've rebelled against God. And God says, I'm going to get rid of those people, and I'll start again with you, Moses.

And Moses, who is appointed as the interceder for the people, he prays, God, think about your reputation. Think about the honor of your name. What will Egypt think? They'll think badly of you. They'll think you've taken them. You've taken them into the desert only to kill them, both concerned for God's glory as they pray.

[ 11 : 12 ] And as Elijah prays, he also knows his God. He knows without a shadow of a doubt, it is the Lord who is in charge.

And the Lord has power. Why else would he pray, let this boy's life return to him? Elijah knows from the past that God is concerned for this widow and to preserve this widow's family.

Elijah knows that God has a passion for his glory, and he wants hearts and lives to be turned towards him as the one true God. He prays knowing God alone is the God of life with the power even to raise the dead. And so he prays boldly and confidently to the God he knows.

And it reminds us of the power and the beauty that there is when as Christians we pray the Bible. When we take what we know about God and his character and the way that he works, and we talk to God in response to what we discover of him in his word. When we claim God's promises, when

we express confidence in God's character. That's how Elijah prays here. And then we come to the climax of this story as God acts, as tragedy is turned to triumph. Verse 22, the Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him and he lived. Elijah picked up the child, gave him to his mother and said, look, your son is alive. And so this mother who'd been so grief-stricken and desolate is now a first-hand eyewitness to another of God's miracles of mercy and power. She can see with her own eyes, look, he is alive. It's interesting to stop and to think about why did this miracle happen?

And what's the purpose of miracles in the Bible? What about Jesus' miracles? And there's a few things I think that we can say about that we may find helpful. When we look at miracles like this, we recognize here is God working in power to restore what is broken. And it's the same whenever Jesus does a miracle. You know, we live in a fallen, broken world. And whenever a healing happens, whenever a resurrection happens, we're given this window into the world we all want. [14:13] The kingdom of God, free of suffering and death. Every time Jesus healed someone or raised someone, it was a picture of His coming kingdom, His determination in the end to put right everything that we had made wrong. And related to that, miracles so often give that pointer to God redeeming what would otherwise be lost. Here again is the God of life who is snatching victory from the jaws of defeat as He snatches life from the power of the grave. It's an action that God did for the whole people of Israel when He rescued them from slavery and death in Egypt. It's what Jesus did when He stood in front of His friend Lazarus' tomb and summoned Him out. And it's what God continues to do whenever He gives someone the gift of faith to repent of sin and to believe in Him. Then there is that movement from spiritual death to spiritual life, and all because of God's power and grace. And miracles then stand to also speak to us of this future glory. They function like the trailers that we see at the cinema, a preview of a story that is coming soon. And the story of Elijah helps us to catch a glimpse of the greater story of Jesus.

Here is Elijah, the prophet, stretching himself over this boy, seeing death defeated and life restored, anticipating the still greater miracle of God's own Son stretched out on the cross, bearing our sin and shame, bearing our sin and shame, going down himself into death as he endured God's judgment and penalty against sin before rising again in victory. As 1 Corinthians 15 reminds us, Jesus has destroyed the last and greatest enemy of death. He is the one who now gives resurrection, life and power to all who will believe. And that work of bringing life in place of death will be completed on the day when our King returns. When Jesus returns, there will be final judgment. Everything will be made new in this world. In His kingdom, there'll be no sorrow, no sadness, no suffering, no death. There will be eternal eternal joy for all those who look to recognize the Son who died for us but is now alive.

As we apply this to our own lives of faith, a couple of things to think about. One, the importance of learning God's character. I really like at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, that image that Jesus gives of the wise builder who builds his house on the rock so when the storms come, the house stands. That rock is Jesus and His Word. And stories like this remind us that when the storms of life hit, we need to know our God, to understand He's the only true and living God, that He is the God who is near and who hears and invites us to turn to Him in all of our pain and confusion, to understand that He is the Lord of covenant faithfulness, that He is the God who can bring good from evil even when we cannot see how that can possibly be the case. And He is the God who has brought spiritual life in place of death, in sending Jesus, who declared, I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die. And that's why we need worship. That's why we need the Word of God. It's why we need the fellowship of other believers to show us, to teach us, to remind us to behold our God. So, we need to learn God's character.

But we also secondly need to lean on the one true God. That's part of Elijah's ministry.

Partly this relates to what we were thinking about this morning. There is a temptation, I think, when life goes bad, that even as we have turned to trust in Jesus for salvation, when life goes bad, we will still look around and we will search around for other things to save us and to get through the problem. Now, we don't know whether this woman was ever tempted to think, oh, if only I'd stuck with bail, things would have turned out better. But it's a good moment to ask ourselves the question, when trouble comes, when hardship comes, what do you and I reach for?

[20:04] Maybe we reach for the remote to distract ourselves from reality. Maybe we reach for the fridge or our phone or a bottle or a wallet. Were we able to ask this widow, what is your only hope in life and death?

Wonderfully, she came to know. It's knowing the one true and living God. And what you and I need to learn and to keep learning is that we need to reach for, run to, and cling on to Jesus, the only Savior.

It's so important that we learn to lean on the one true God. If we're not yet a Christian, we're here tonight. Consider the son in the story. He's not really the major character in one sense, but here is a child in a lifeless, helpless situation without God's intervention. The only source of life for him was God's man being sent to pray and to act and to give life.

Each one of us needs God's life-giving power to bring spiritual life where without him we are spiritually dead.

We need God to give us the gift of faith to see that we are lost and helpless and hopeless in our sin. [ 21 : 51 ] That new life comes from God alone. Eternal life comes through the Son who is stretched out to save. And that you would seek him for forgiveness in new life, recognizing him as risen Lord and Savior.

Well, having thought about this story and this movement from tragedy to triumph, let's think really briefly about the woman's testimony to truth.

The woman said to Elijah, now I know that you're a man of God and the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth. I picture all this woman has been through with her son in her recent past, making those desperate preparations, anticipating that hopeless last meal before waiting together for starvation.

And in that moment, in step Elijah and in step Elijah's God. And every day since then, while Baal, the idol of the region has done nothing to cause the rain to fall or the crops to grow, the true God has been given to the, to the widow and to her son and to the wider household, oil and flour every day.

He has been their source of life. And now, as she cradles the sun once again, no longer lifeless and gone, but returned to life and health, she knows and understands in a new way.

[ 23 : 37 ] Here is the true God. Here is the source of true life. He is the one who can give life even beyond the grave.

Like every follower of Jesus, she has come to discover it is God's word, God's powerful word that gives life and sustains spiritual life.

And like this woman, we are called to be like those disciples. Well, where else would we go? Because we know that Jesus alone has the words of eternal life.

When we come to discover Jesus is the way, the truth and the life that no one comes to the father except through him, that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, that he is able to give us eternal life through his own death.

We never shift from that. We never shift from him. But rather we know in a new way.

[ 24 : 52 ] And we celebrate. Imagine this woman sharing her story. Two more lessons. First is this, let wonder lead you to worship.

There is that natural reaction, that natural reflex, and we see it in this woman. She's discovered something truly wonderful. She has seen her son die.

And now she has seen her son alive. And so, of course, she is full of joy. And of course, she wants to celebrate this discovery.

You sense the joy bubbling up in her words. And no wonder. God's mighty acts, God's righteous acts, God's saving acts, she's seen one up close and personal.

And it's wonderful. And that's always the way it goes in the Bible. So, we read a little bit of Psalm 71 at the beginning. The testimony there, throughout the Psalm, I will proclaim your mighty act.

[ 25 : 55 ] My mouth will tell of your salvation. Though you have made me see troubles, you restore my life again. Wonder at who God is, and what He has done, leads to worship.

There is a joy that is natural, only for the Christian. It's a joy that lies beyond circumstance.

It's a joy that runs deep. Paul had it. The book of Philippians, we see it all over the place. He had joy, even although he was in chains. He had joy because he could see the gospel was spreading, even through the prison.

He had joy because he was discovering news that people were getting closer to Jesus. And he joyfully exclaims, for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

He saw the risen Jesus. He knew the power of God, turning him from an enemy into a friend, into a saint apostle, and it caused him to live his life worshipping.

[ 27 : 08 ] As we remind ourselves, as we gather for worship, as we remind ourselves, every time we read the Bible, as we reflect on the good news of salvation, we're reminding ourselves why Jesus deserves to be, and is our one hope in life and in death.

And as we allow that wonder to lead us to worship, then that will also help us to talk about Jesus with others.

It will come more naturally, because the second thing is that witnessing flows from worship. Telling others about Jesus flows from worship.

Inviting others to discover here is the one who can give life in place of death comes when we reflect on God's beauty and truth and goodness and holiness and redeeming love.

witnessing flows from our worship. You know, think about the widow's story. Can we imagine this widow not bursting to tell her friends and neighbors?

[ 28 : 20 ] Can we imagine this not making a difference in the community? You know, they've maybe been praying desperately to Baal, and there's still no rain, and their cupboards are bare.

And then to hear this widow's testimony, the one true and living God has given my son life back from death. You can guarantee they're going to hear testimony about the power of God.

As we let people into our lives, they're going to see how we face hardships. They're going to discover how important our faith is to us.

And in those moments, we get to show them Jesus. We get to invite them to hear the true story of the gospel. of Jesus, the Son of God, the one who entered into this world of suffering, the one who embraced death to forgive our sin and give us life, the one who extends the invitation to all of us to know Him, to enjoy a hope that is death-proof, because it comes from the one true and living God, the one who gives eternal life.

Let's pray. Let's pray.