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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**September 28, 2014**

**When God Makes No Sense**

**1 Kings 17:1-6**

**Prayer:** *Father, we just want to thank you again for your grace, we thank you for your goodness and your mercy, we just thank you for the privilege that we have every Sunday to come together to offer up to the corporate worship we just had, for the ability to gather and not worry about police or neighbors or wicked people doing wicked things, and so we just again, we thank you for what we have and what the rest of the world rapidly seems to be losing. And so I just again pray this morning, Lord, that we -- while we have this privilege, we would just again thank you for it, pray for your Holy Spirit's presence, and again pray that you would give us the ability to open your word and make it of lasting value, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we're in a new series and we've been looking at the life of Elijah and we said, Elijah was God's prophet and was used mightily at a time when Israel had gone far, far away from the truth.

Israel was divided into a northern kingdom that kept the name Israel and a southern kingdom that was called Judah, and from the

time they were divided, Israel, that is the northern kingdom, was ruled by a series of monstrously wicked rulers. They had had 19 different kings up to the time they were taken captive by the Assyrians; each one was worse than the one before him. And God repeatedly sent prophets to Israel warning them of their wickedness and they were routinely ignored or persecuted. So we begin to hone in on Elijah's time, and at that time we see a culture in the advanced stage of spiritual collapse under Ahab and Jezebel, arguably two of the most wicked people to ever walk the planet. And so we're looking at this scripture that we looked at last week to introduce Ahab and it says this in *1 Kings 16:31*, it says: *And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.*

So I spoke last week about the holy boldness of Elijah and how this prophet who we knew very little about when he comes on the scene, he just appears and he marches directly into the throne room of two of the most wicked people on earth. And he marches in with this announcement from *1 Kings 17:1*: *Now Elijah the Tishbite, of*

*Tishbe, in Gilead, 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."* I pointed out last time that it was Elijah's holy boldness that caused him first to speak truth to power, that is he was not cowed by who it was that God had given him to confront; and number two, to initiate rather than to respond. Elijah didn't wait for Ahab and Jezebel to come to him. It was Elijah who took the initiative. And thirdly, his boldness caused him to be willing to let the consequences fall where they may. I mean Elijah knew that many a prophet before him had suffered terribly for boldly proclaiming the truth to those in power, but he didn't care. He simply trusted in God for the outcome. He knew that his God was the all powerful maker of heaven and earth, that he had moved powerfully and mightily among his people before, he knew that Moses had exercised God's divine power in all of those plagues that he had unleashed on Egypt, that God had rescued his people by parting the Red Sea, that he had surrounded and protected them for 40 years in the desert, he knew all of that. In the 600 years or so since the day, that day, Elijah had known of great leaders like Gideon and Samuel and David who moved God's people from idol worship to a renewed understanding of Jehovah as the covenant God.

So now he marches into the very throne room of Ahab and Jezebel to

deliver God's ultimatum. And what happened next couldn't possibly have been on Elijah's radar. This is found in verse 2. It says: *And 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."* Now remember Moses called down ten plagues on Pharaoh, Samuel brought Saul and David to lead Israel into a complete military conquest of its enemies, and David himself said in *1 Chronicles 29: Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the Kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and give strength to all.*

So now in the light of the profound wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel, God reveals to Elijah his mighty plan, tells him, Elijah, it's time to go run and hide. This is the mighty God. This is the God who declares in *Romans 13: There is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.* This is God now telling Elijah, Elijah, it's time to get out of dodge. I can't imagine how that sounded to Elijah. *1 Kings 17 says: And 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.*

This is not the way a mighty God is supposed to act. This is not what Elijah would have expected. This had to be absolutely confounding to Elijah, and it begs the question for us. Have you ever been confounded by God? Have you ever thought that at least in some limited way an understanding of what God was doing in your life was there only to find out that you weren't even close? Have you ever been disappointed in God? I mean, have you ever felt that you've trusted him, prayed to him, sought out his will and tried to do it only to feel like the heavens have mocked you for trying? Well, if you've never felt like that, there are three possibilities for why that is. Number one, well, it might mean you've never really taken that kind of risk so you don't know really what it's like to feel that kind of disappointment; or number two, you've set your expectations so low that God couldn't possibly disappoint you; or three, God has answered virtually every request you've ever made precisely how you've made it. And if you're in that third category, please talk to me afterwards, I've never met anybody like you and I'd like to get your autograph. See, the point is a life

of faith is a life spent constantly working at understanding my relationship with God. It is a life spent working at adjusting my understanding and my perspective so that I'm on his wavelength rather than he be on mine.

Donald Gray Barnhouse once described living in God's will that way by describing a man he knew who every week would religiously tune in to this live broadcast of the Philadelphia Orchestra. See, once a week -- this was years ago -- once a week they would play a live piece that that would be broadcast nationally. And this man used to tune in, he was an amateur violinist who thought that he would be playing with the Philharmonic Orchestra and as the hour approached, he would tune up, he would get ready, and when they began to play, he would do his best to follow along as if he were part of the orchestra. You could make a case for this is how the will of God operates. See, God moves and we move and we move either in tune or out of tune with him, and you could study the score, you could learn the piece, you could understand how the players play, and you might be able to be perfectly in tune and flow effortlessly with the music. Or you might find that the director has changed the score and you're out of sync, out of tune, and you're playing a discordant mess, but you know, neither approach is going to change the performance. You can study the scripture and you can learn and grow in your knowledge of God and

you'll be able to play along with the score a lot better than if you didn't, but God is in charge and he alone knows the score. And sometimes his music is nothing like we could have imagined. Elijah got the tune and he got the melody and he played his part perfectly but having played his part, he now found out that God was changing the tune entirely. Elijah would go from the center of power in the very throne room of Ahab and Jezebel to absolute and complete obscurity. His only companions would be some birds, some ravens charged with feeding him daily, his only distraction is his morning and his evening meals. You know, my guess is the novelty of the situation wore off after a relatively short period of time, but we can deduce that he was there for quite a while. I mean, *1 Kings 17:5* says: *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.*

God had asked of Elijah what is perhaps the hardest thing of all to do, and that's nothing. I mean, sometimes God's music has pauses in it that make no sense at all to us, times when we can do nothing about a situation but simply wait for God to give clarity or direction, and we humans find that extremely difficult. I once heard of a great fire that had taken place back in the days when there were no fire hydrants and they only had pumper trucks. There was a house that was on fire and the pumper truck had failed, the firemen and everybody were just kind of sitting around watching

this house burned down, and one of the firemen grabbed the axe from the side of the truck and he started furiously chopping down a tree and someone asked what he was doing. He said, "I couldn't do nothing. I had to do something." Being forced to do nothing has become the fate of millions and millions of unemployed Americans today. A Rutgers University report finds "About one-third of the long-term unemployed workers -- six months or more -- in the study, based on surveys of unemployed and employed Americans across the nation, said they had been 'devastated' and suffered a permanent change in their life-style by their jobless experience. The study, titled, 'Left Behind: The long-term unemployed struggle in an improving economy' found out that one in five workers laid off in the last five years are still unemployed. And it showed how far long term jobless workers slip compared with employed workers.'

Now I guess that these folks know all too well how Elijah must have felt. And these are folks who have paid their dues and kept their noses clean through no fault of their own they've been given the very same task that Elijah's been given. Nothing. For believers, this can be devastating. You know, for some reason God has changed the score and the music doesn't make sense any more. Elijah must have known that feeling. But at least he had the food in the brook to keep him going, up until verse 7. It says: *And after a while the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.* It's a big oops. Now, on one level this is clearly the answer to Elijah's

prayer, I mean, he prayed for the heavens to shut up and they did. But God had always provided, and now that's gone. And just like everyone else, now Elijah has to face the music.

Now, have you ever experienced your stream running dry? Have you ever felt that God was not only not listening but was actively working against you, that God had now for some reason become your enemy? I once had a dear friend who lost his job for all the right reasons. He was an Army chaplain who went toe to toe with his superior officer because the superior officer demanded that the continue the practice of showing pornography to the soldiers, my friend demanded that is it stop, and he wound up getting into a major battle, and he wound up getting a career ending black mark on his record. And so with his wife and seven kids, he resigned. Now he had done the right thing morally and because he had, he kind of thought God would honor his commitment with a reasonably soft landing outside of the military. That didn't happen. The stream dried up and unemployment became his daily grind. Things rapidly went from bad to worse and he wound up going through his life savings, and like Elijah, months began to turn into years where he was just eeking out an existence through manual labor. And like Elijah, he had gone from a position of prestige and authority to one of absolute obscurity where he was an absolute nobody. And it all happened because he was obedient, because he was faithful. And

so he kept on waiting for things to get better and just like in Elijah's case, they just seemed to get worse. And when he thought things couldn't possibly get worse, his son had a massive seizure. And as he was holding his apparently lifeless body waiting for the ambulance, I remember him telling me how he said how I felt I just wanted to go to a top of a hill and scream and shout and shake my fist at God, but he said I realized the only thing I'd get out of it would be a sore throat. Maybe you know of a similar horror story. And my guess is if we don't say it, we all think it, we think God, what gives? The words of Psalm 22 first spoken by David come to mind. He said this, he said: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest."* Job had a similar lament in Job 30, he said: *"I cry to you for help and you do not answer me; I stand, and you only look at me. You have turned cruel to me; with the might of your hand you persecute me. You lift me up on the wind; you make me ride on it, and you toss me about in the roar of the storm."* Well now, if David and Job who we know by God's own word were incredibly close to God's heart, if they could feel this sense of abandonment in the midst of a struggle, I think it's safe to assume that Elijah could have felt it as well. I know my friend felt it, I know I have felt it at times as well. I suspect that many of you have as well.

Well, allow me to suggest some possible reasons for why God would allow that to happen. I think it all has to do with God's plan, God's patience, and God's perspective. So let's look at those in order. Number one, God's plan. We can deduce some things about God's plan in leading Elijah out into the wilderness, I mean, we know that the gods that Ahab and Jezebel worshiped were the gods of fertility, the gods of agricultural success, gods who were tied heavily into the idea of rain. So God's plan was to expose them as false gods who had no power at all to save. Remember, this is an agrarian culture and they didn't have the luxury of elaborate irrigation systems and they relied exclusively on the heavens to water their crops, and so closing off the heavens was God's way of shutting off their water supply and forcing them to examine where a resource they had taken for granted, well where that resource actually came from. And as it was, it took years for the lakes and the streams and the ponds to all dry up and for the situation to reach the critical stage. It was a stage where water, once taken for granted had now totally disappeared. So God was taking his time to run out the natural resources that had been so abundant that these people never had to think twice about where it came from, and the result was they never gave God a second thought. And God had warned them repeatedly. In *Deuteronomy 6* he says: "*And when the LORD your God brings you into the land that he swore to*

*your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you -- with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant -- and when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."* This warning applies to us as well. You see, when our food comes from a refrigerator, when our water comes from a faucet and our protection comes from the police department or the military, it becomes easier and easier for us to simply forget about the Lord. Elijah had no such luxury. His very food and drink were delivered divinely each day by ravens, that is, until the creek dried up and then even that hope was dashed. You know, Mark Dever observed that the devil and God both destroy hope, each for very different reasons. See, the devil takes away our hope in order to drive us into the ground, and sometimes God takes away our hope in order to drive us deeper into his kingdom. And as we read in scripture, it seems like every great saint is brought to that moment sometimes repeatedly, that moment where they feel all hope is gone and God has abandoned him. You know, David had it when he was on the run from Saul, and Job had it when his health disappeared, and Joseph had it when he was sitting in a dungeon knowing that he was completely innocent, and now Elijah has it. So days and weeks and months and probably years of absolute obscurity

are culminating in the one meager thing that he still had, and now it disappears. It may not have looked like it, but Elijah was in the center of God's plan. And the fact is God was in the midst of answering Elijah's prayer. James 5 says: *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 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.* It's easy for us to see God drying up the creek as an answer to Elijah's own prayer, as part of the great plan designed to force a confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal and as a means for moving Elijah back into the city to begin to set the stage for a confrontation.

But here's the question. What did Elijah see? You see, it's a tricky business trying to guess the music that God is going to play. And as someone once said, the only way for certain to know what God's sovereign plan for you for Wednesday is Thursday. I mean, it's easy to see God's plan for Elijah when we can look backwards. You know, hindsight as they say is always 20-20, but we cannot live on hindsight. And when God does things in our life that are mystifying or terrifying or stupefying, we all have a tendency to think this could not be God's plan for me. Of course the only conclusion to that line of thinking is that there is no plan for me, and somehow just like Elijah, I'm off God's radar, I'm

on my own and good luck. Well, that's a lie. And that's a lie from the father of lies. Remember when the enemy lies, he's speaking his native tongue and when life is hard or mystifying, he's going to be the first one to start whispering in your ear, the very first one to tell you that you are out of God's plan or worse still, that there was never a plan in the first place. But what if the plan was something way beyond what you could have thought on your own? What if the music that God is playing is a tune that you've never, never heard before? What if God's plan looked at your life not just for the immediate future of a couple of days, weeks, or months but for years or even decades? I mean, could God be doing something in your life today that wouldn't have an effect for three and a half years like Elijah? Or ten years? Or twenty? We don't know and we can't know. That's why Paul says in *1 Corinthians 13: For now we see through a glass, darkly.* You know, God took twenty-five years to work out his plan with Abraham. He took forty to train Moses in the desert. He took Joseph all the way to Egypt to work out his plan and much of that time Joseph spent utterly mystified by what God was doing. I know I have been mystified many times, and in each case God was still at work even if all I could see was nothing. What if that nothing that we think we are facing is actually in God's economy something of great and lasting value that's way outside of our radar? What if God's plan for you was to move you all the way across the country simply so

that you might have a single conversation with one person? Can God play his music that differently? Could he play it differently than we would ever suppose? You know, I know I came to Christ through a number of random conversations I had with people who just popped into my life for a moment and then they disappeared. They never knew how important they were. And so could God so order your life and mine that he would say hey, I'm sending you to California for the next three years so that in the middle of a single conversation that you're going to have with one person, you're going to find out that there's something of significance that you're doing and you're not going to find it out until you're dead. You think it's for this, that, or the other reason, but I alone know what the real reason is. Could God actually have that much freedom to work his plans into our lives, plans that we cannot even fathom? *Isaiah 55* says: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."* In other words, would it not be a fool's errand to try to figure out precisely what God's plan is for each of our lives? And all God really wants from us is to live on faith. You know, I know it's a cliché but I find myself saying it over and over again, the cliché is this line: I don't know what the future holds but I know who holds the future. Cliché or not, it is exactly the attitude we need to have about God's plans for

our lives.

The second aspect is patience. Now, if you were taken like Elijah was from the very height of power and thrust into complete obscurity, you might tend to think after a few months maybe, maybe God has forgotten me. And when the months stretch into years, what seems like a possibility starts to enter your mind as a certainty. God has forgotten me. We have the benefit of thousands of years of hindsight when it comes to understanding God's plans for Elijah, and so it's easy for us now to say that God was preparing him for a major confrontation between the forces of good and the forces of evil, that he was growing in Elijah complete and full dependence on God instead of his own abilities and critical to that growth was his understanding of God's patience. God was developing in Elijah the ability to have patience in his plan even if it took years to implement. Elijah is not alone. A very sizeable percentage of people who are unhappy with God are in reality unhappy with God's understanding of time. I've said it many times that we in the west are very used to wanting everything yesterday. We have a very unnatural and contrived way of applying a western industrialized understanding of time to a God who has never ever treated time in that way. And we wind up feeling abused or abandoned because we think God is either ignoring us or just refusing us when in reality God may be simply operating on an entirely different timetable than

the one that we operate out of, and God rightly refuses to adapt to our corrupted notions of what time is. And you know, there's plenty of evidence in scripture that points to God's timing being wholly other than ours. And it flies right in the face of the way we in the west view time. God knows that our view of time and his are polar opposites. In fact, he focuses in on the scoffer in 2 Peter to show those differences. In 2 Peter 3 it says this: *Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."* God is directly responding to scoffers. These are scoffers who have heard God's promises and they've seen years and years go by without any action on God's part, so they're concluding, well, his promises are not to be taken seriously. God's response to that is to flat out tell us he doesn't view time like we do. God says in 2 Peter 3:8, he says: *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

You see, God's management of time and his understanding of patience

is simply unacceptable to a culture that has made a god out of timeliness, and God's timeliness is altogether different. Jesus Christ left heaven, and he entered into earth and he took on flesh in the fullness of time, that is according to God's timetable and not ours. And that timetable is a timetable that's comfortable with centuries and millennia as it is with days, weeks, and months. When the Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross, he was paying for your sins and my sins even though we wouldn't be born for thousands of years. God's patience simply waits. And I'm personally thankful that God waited those years for me to be born, and rebel, and get broken and seek repentance because if it wasn't for the fact that he is patient toward us, not wanting any of his own to perish, then few of us would ever have entered the kingdom of God. So when I'm tempted to grow impatient with God's patience, it's helpful to remember that without that patience, we all would have been doomed. We have no idea whether or not God's patience will continue for another 50 or 500,000 years until the very last sheep enters the kingdom or whether it's going to end this afternoon. And all of that is in God's timing. And like I said, God's timing is nothing like ours, and the scripture is replete with examples. God tells Abraham he's going to provide him with a son. 25 years later God makes good on his promise. And not once did God feel compelled to tell Abraham the length of time it would take to fulfill that promise. He never once told Abraham the

answer to his promise is going to take two and a half decades. God's time is not our timing. Moses flees into the desert and it's a good 40 years before he hears God speaking to him in a burning bush. You know, you wonder did God forgot Moses or is a 40-year delay perfectly appropriate in God's economy, because God's timing is not our timing. I mean, Elijah didn't just run off to the brook Cherith until things cooled down. The scripture says he went there to live. And God told Elijah like he told Moses and Abraham to go hurry up and wait. And each of these cases God was very willing to wait years before he acted. And in none of these cases was there ever a hint of an apology for his tardiness. And the reason why God wasn't sorry is because God wasn't tardy. He was absolutely not efficient in his use of time but he wasn't tardy because everything he does he does perfectly, including his timing. So God's timetable for Elijah had a three-and-a-half-year pause in the action just so the effect of his prayer could work its way back to Ahab and Jezebel.

So here's the question: Has God ever put a multi-year hold on your plans? Could he? Or would he lose you? My friend in the military found out that God had a five-year pause in the music in his life. It was no picnic at all, but he found that God had sustained him through it all, and after five years, the military called again, they were desperate for chaplains to go to Iraq and so they asked

him to go. And so he went and he resumed his career and he wound up retiring as a full bird colonel. Looking back on it, he said it was very, very hard being thrust into nothing but it was very good, he said. He said God became real on a level he had never been before. And my friend looks back on those years as some of the hardest but some of the best in his entire life. And so perhaps God's timetable for you as been a source of great stress and anxiety. Well, it just might be that his timetable and ours are vastly different. And that faith in God's plan means trusting in his patience.

Thirdly, the key to trusting in God's plan and his patience is understanding our lives through his perspective. No one understood God's plan and God's patience better than the apostle Paul. He had the unique ability to see both the kingdom of earth and the kingdom of heaven at the same time and it affected the way he lived on planet earth. He bought into and completely owned God's plans and God's patience and it gave him God's perspective on life itself. Paul said in *2 Corinthians 4: For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.* So Paul considers his life of stoning, beating, abandonment, near drowning,

and betrayal to be a light and momentary affliction because he continuously and actively compared his life to the life that was to come. And the more you and I see from heaven's perspective, the more life on this earth will make absolute sense. Elijah's life could have easily seemed like a profound and disappointing mystery if you were walking through it moment by moment. But we get to see the big picture; we get to see the picture from heaven's side. We have a heavenly perspective on what's taking place in Elijah's life and it's that perspective that causes everything in his life to fall into place. Well, the fact is God's plan and God's patience is working itself out uniquely in every one of our lives exactly the way it's working itself out in Elijah's. But we still have to walk through our lives moment by moment. And so what we need is a heavenly perspective.

I got a phone call just the other day from a man that I've known for over 36 years. He was very excited about where he was headed to next and he wanted to share with me his excitement. The man was Pastor Foster who I first met in 1978. It was Pastor Foster who was the pastor at First Baptist when I was over there, and he took me under his wing and he introduced me to reformed theology and he just peppered me book after book as he grew and developed my love for the sovereignty of God. He's now in his 90's and he's been in Texas living with his daughter. And at the beginning of the

summer, he came back to New York but he wanted to call me and share his excitement about where he was headed next. And the place that Pastor Foster was excited about going to is heaven. He was calling to tell me that he had approximately two to three weeks to live, that the leukemia that he now has was something that he was not going to seek any more treatment for and that this week he was heading back to Texas, he said, to die. He was genuinely excited at the prospect, and he marveled that some people actually said they felt sorry for him. I mean, he found that perplexing because he was as excited as he could be about the very real possibility that within three weeks he would be with his loved ones, his friends, and with his precious Lord Jesus Christ. He told me that he'd been sharing with a good friend that he was looking forward to this journey, and his friend suggested why don't you call up all of those people in your life that you want to and make your final good-byes. Hence his phone call to me. And so we chatted for a while and he told me how God had been bringing lots of people into his life in these last few weeks, there were old enemies, and there were old friends, and lots of people somewhere in between, he said as he looked back on his life of 90-plus years, he realized that what was now precious to him were those times when he had truly trusted in God and shared that trust with others. I had the privilege of telling him how important he had been to my walk and how he had changed the trajectory of my understanding of God, and I

know that meant a great deal to him. I told him that it was a privilege that God had given him a schedule and more or less an appointed time so that he could put all of his affairs in order, and I don't know that we're going to get that same privilege, but I know for certain that every one of us is going to have a time when we begin to look backwards on just what was important in our lives and what really mattered. You know, it's sobering talking with a man who is facing imminent death. And hearing from him what I already know to be true, and what he was saying is that the vast majority of our life efforts will turn out in the end to have been a meaningless chasing after the wind. And what loomed as absolutely critical today will seem profoundly silly tomorrow. And at some point we're all going to be looking in the rear view mirror like Pastor Foster is and I wonder what will we see. I mean, will we be able to look back and see things that may have appeared minor today but will loom as vastly more significant than those times that we think really mattered. Perhaps it will be times when we trusted in God, when our stream dried up, and when the music God was playing didn't seem to make any sense at all. I know for a fact it will be those times when we prayed and shared and cried and trusted and encouraged others in their walk because I know those are the things that really matter. You see, Pastor Foster can look in his rear view mirror and he can see kingdom things that mean so much to him that right now bring great joy and excitement as he

prepares to meet his God. He can see them right now for what they really are, and he sees all the rest as just chasing after the wind. Here's the key. The ability to see that before our lives draw to a close is all a matter of perspective. Elijah's life ended thousands of years ago. Pastor Foster's is going to end within the next couple of weeks, but they all share one thing in common. They both see now with crystal clarity God's plan, God's patience, and God's perspective, and they'll be the first to affirm only one life so soon it will pass, only what's done for Christ will last. Let's pray.

*Father God, I thank you, I thank you for your plan, I thank you for your patience, I thank you for your perspective, I thank you for all that makes up what it is to understand how this kingdom works and how the kingdom of heaven works. Father, I pray that you would give us the ability here and now to see what really matters and what is absolute nonsense. Father, we spend so much of our time chasing after the wind, so much time pursuing things that have no lasting values and to talk with a man who is facing death and understand as he understands that those things that are now coming out of his life that give him joy and pleasure are kingdom things, things that really matter, conversations that he had, people that he spoke to, people that he cried with, people that he meant something for Christ to. Father, I pray that you would give us the*

ability to have that perspective here and now while we are still building our lives so that when that time comes when we're looking into the rear view mirror, there'll be something there, something other than wind. Give us the grace to pursue your kingdom today, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.