

## It's Sunday. But Monday's a Coming!

### 1 Kings 18-19

Scripture Reading 1 Kings 18:17-39 (Reading before sermon)

**Slide 1** Welcome!

**Slide 2**

Dr. Tony Campolo, a multi-talented individual who has been a sociologist, author, pastor..., tells a story of when he was in a little preaching competition with his pastor during services at the church where he attends. Dr. Campolo tells how he preached the perfect sermon, perfect in every way. He had taken the congregation to the heights of glory. And as he sat down beside his pastor, Dr. Campolo patted him on the knee and simply said, "Top that." The older black pastor looked at him and said, "Boy, watch the master."

It was a simple sermon, starting softly, building in volume and intensity until the entire congregation was completely involved, repeating the phrases in unison. The sermon went something like this.

It's Friday. Jesus is arrested in the garden where He was praying. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. The disciples are hiding and Peter's denying that he knows the Lord. But Sunday's coming.

It's Friday. Jesus is hanging on the cross, heaven is weeping and hell is partying. But that's because it's Friday, and they don't know it, but Sunday's a coming.

And on that horrible day 2000 years ago, Jesus the Christ, the Lord of glory, the only begotten Son of God, the only perfect man died on the cross of Calvary. Satan thought that he had won the victory. Surely he had destroyed the Son of God. Finally he had disproved

the prophecy God had uttered in the Garden and the one who was to crush his head had been destroyed. But that was Friday.

Now it's Sunday. And just about dawn on that first day of the week, there was a great earthquake. But that wasn't the only thing that was shaking because now it's Sunday. And the angel of the Lord is coming down out of heaven and rolling the stone away from the door of the tomb. Yes, it's Sunday, and the angel of the Lord is sitting on that stone and the guards posted at the tomb to keep the body from disappearing were shaking in their boots because it's Sunday, and the lamb that was silent before the slaughter is now the resurrected lion from the tribe of Judah, for He is not here, the angel says. He is risen indeed.

It's Sunday, and the crucified/resurrected Christ has defeated death, hell, sin and the grave. It's Sunday. And now everything has changed. It's the age of grace, God's grace poured out on all who would look to that crucified lamb of Calvary. Grace freely given to all who would believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary was buried and rose again. All because it's Sunday.

### **Slide 3 It's Friday! But Sunday's Coming!**

And if you would like to hear a similar, complete sermon, checkout Pastor Lockridge on YouTube.

Unfortunately, I'm neither Tony Compolo or his black pastor. And therefore, the title of my less than thrilling sermon is **It's Sunday! But Monday's Coming!**

### **Slide 4 It's Sunday! But Monday's Coming!**

One of my all time favorite stories of the Bible was read for us this morning, the story of Elijah defeating the prophets of Baal on Mount Caramel with Marshmallows.

Just a quick background:

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Our two books of Kings were originally just one book in the Jewish scriptures. God's design for Israel was to be a light to the world bringing about His Reign through King David and his offspring as we find in 2 Samuel CH 7 'The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son.'

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The book of Kings fill in the story of Israel's Kings beginning with the reign of King Solomon, David's son, through the division of the Kingdom into the north, Israel, and the south, Judah, to the complete demise of Jerusalem and the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon leading to many Israelites taken captive to Babylon.

You see it had been Friday in Israel; and to understand how bad this "Friday" was in Israel we need a quick history lesson. The glory years of king David and his son, Solomon, had brought great prosperity to the nation. But in the middle of Solomon's reign he began to act foolishly. He brought upon himself the disfavor of God by allowing idolatry to invade his kingdom through foreign marriages, and he brought great burdens upon the people through heavy taxes and unpaid labor to fund his own extravagances.

And again, unfortunately when Rehoboam, Solomon's son, took over the throne he was even more foolish. Here is the Bible Project's telling the story...

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And so in this darkest of Fridays, God brings forth the prophet Elijah to announce it is Sunday! And as you heard, God's power is displayed in an amazing, awesome way. It

would be an amazing movie with the superhero Elijah, wicked seductive Jezebel, bumbling fool Ahab for comic relief, and lots of special effects with fire. And then beginning in 1 Kings 18:40 we have the bloody gore part of the movie (which you always have to have to sell tickets) with the killing of the prophets of Baal; and then the emotional climax of the movie with the joy of the rain ending the over 2 year drought; and the race to Jezreel to end the movie.

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Jezreel was between fifteen and twenty miles from the Carmel area and was a winter capital for Ahab. Elijah is running ahead of Ahab and his chariot under the power of Yahweh, and apparently is playing the role of a media front man to let everyone know that Ahab has changed and is now loyal to Yahweh. [Short GREEN line in the map].

What a great movie! What a Sunday to celebrate! I don't think we appreciate that this is one of the 3 greatest time periods of mighty works of God in the Bible. 1<sup>st</sup> is the Exodus with Moses and Mt. Sinai. 2<sup>nd</sup> is this time period with Elijah and Mt. Carmel. 3<sup>rd</sup> is the ministry of Jesus Christ and Mt. Calvary. And of course the Transfiguration of Christ is the culminating point of His public life, when he took Peter, James and John to a high mountain and he was transfigured and joined by Moses and Elijah bringing all three epochs together.

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This event was no ordinary "Sunday," but even a prelude of Christ's victory on the cross. Yes, it was Friday in the land of Israel. **But today, it is Sunday!** (long pause)

However, I would like us to look at Monday. The day after. The days most of us live out our Christianity, which is not Sunday, but Monday, and Tuesday and Wednesday... the rest of the week.

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Monday begins in chapter 19 of 1 Kings:

1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

This sequel of the first movie would never sell a ticket. Elijah goes to the highest of Super Herodom to the bottom of despondency within 24 hours.

What has happened? Is he truly afraid and running away to save his life? After God just displayed his awesome power and he wiped out the priests of Baal?

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And why did he not go into Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, for protection under the King Jehosaphat to get away from Jezebel, but instead went to Beersheba, about 100-120 miles south from Jezreel, and he then left his servant and ran another day into the wilderness so he was totally alone and unprotected. [RED line in the map]

He then prays to die and falls asleep under a broom tree.

How many of you have the word "afraid" in verse 3 of chapter 19? How many the word "saw"? This Hebrew word can be vocalized either way, and the wording is rather abrupt or

quick: “He saw (was afraid), he arose, he ran for his life or soul”. There has been much debate about Elijah’s state of mind and what was really going on.

Let us look at his prayer in 1 Kings 18:36-37 to get some insight: At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed:

"O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, **let it be known today** that

- 1) you are God in Israel and
- 2) I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.

Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that

- 3) you, O LORD, are God, and
- 4) you are turning their hearts back again."

Do you see the parallelism, the emphasis, in his prayer?

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### Verse 36 to 37

36a - O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel let it be known today that

37a' - Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that

36b - you are God in Israel

37b' - you, O LORD, are God,

36c - I am your servant and have done all these things at your command

37c' - you are turning their hearts back again.

Summary - God let it be known that you are God in Israel and I have done all these things at your command and because of this you are turning all Israel back to you.

1 Kings 19:4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said.

**"Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."**

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More than likely the reference to “ancestors” is the prophetic line of men who over the years tried to get Israel to turn from her sin and to God. They all failed. So did Elijah – at least in his mind!

1 Kings 19:10 He (Elijah) replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

Elijah cries out – I am the only one serving you! After this great, amazing Sunday, nothing has changed! It’s all the same. **It’s just another Monday.** Nothing matters – and I was hoping that you God were going to turn all of Israel back to yourself and I would be the prophet of all time that saw the greatest revival in Israel and instead NOTHING happened. It is simply Monday morning, and everything is just the same as it always has been.

I would suggest it is not so much that Elijah was “afraid,” but he **saw** that his deepest hope, his life dream had just vanished in the air when he heard not the news of great revival in Israel, but the threats of the raving Jezebel. Does that make sense? Do you see how the very subtle clue in his first prayer leads to the revealing of this deep hope, this goal he had?

And of course, are we not all the same. We have deep desires and hopes. Goals we strive for. Some are very plainly known, some are more subtle. Some might not be even made aware to us until we hit a brick wall, like Elijah did. Let me give some examples:

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I want to be the best **employee** at work for God, and at the same time, maybe not even consciously, I want the attention and praise of others. And what happens when I do not get it, but someone else does?

I want to truly love my **spouse** as Christ has loved me, and at the same time, maybe not even consciously, I want my spouse to always react and respond just the way I want him or her to. And what happens when my spouse responds in a very different way than I want him or her to?

I want to be the **parent** God has called me to be, and at the same time, maybe not even consciously, I want my children to always be safe and to be really, really good children. And what happens when God allows something to happen to them, or they do not obey or perform as I would like them to?

And the list goes on, every Monday...

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I would like to talk a little about good legitimate **Goals** that we should strive for compared to good, deep desires that we can pray for.

**Goals** are things God has promised and you have the power and authority to make happen.

**Desires** are things God has not promised and you do not have the power or authority to accomplish.

Understanding this difference can make a profound difference in your life and at least help minimize some of the pain we needlessly experience in life.

Let's say I am a car salesman and deep down I want to be the top salesperson and sell more cars than anyone else. Is this a goal (God has promised it and you have the power and authority to make it happen) or a desire (God has not promised it and you do not have the power or authority to accomplish)?

A desire! God has not promised me this, and I have not the power or authority over whether my company makes a lemon, the weather, the economy, whether people will buy, etc.

Does this mean I can have no goals? No! I can have goals of knowing as much as I can about the cars I sell, I can have a goal to make 10 sales calls a day, learn techniques to be friendly, how to close a deal. I can learn to be responsible and pray that God will do the rest.

However, far too often we set our hearts on the ultimate end – being the best salesperson for the attention and money and miss the key small steps of being responsible. This is the same with I want good grades and am mad at the teachers when I do not get good grades, but if my focus is on the end result – getting good grades and not the step-by-step process of studying, asking for help, etc., I will always end up like Elijah has, even though I had a good desire.

As a parent, it is a good thing to pray that your children will be safe and will be obedient and will follow God, but God has not promised this and if your whole life is based on this type of goal, you are setting yourself up for an Elijah type of experience. If God in a perfect environment – the garden, with perfect kids – Adam and Eve, could not keep His kids safe and obedient; how do you think you will? Does this mean despair? No!

It means to have the right focus – Allowing God’s grace to help you respond in a loving way to children, setting up appropriate limits with plenty of freedom within those limits, learning how to help your child with special needs or difficulties, etc. In other words, the focus is on me as a parent and not the eventual outcome of my child with whom I have little to no “power,” but I can have significant influence on by how I love, respond and model a life that is learning to know, love and follow Jesus.

Are you struggling with a particular sin or addiction? Should your only focus be on crying out to God to rid you of this struggle, with the belief that at some point and time God will just send down fire from heaven and you will be completely different? Or, do you trust in God's grace and sufficiency as you learn from His word, from the counsel of others and build into your life truth, safeguards, daily habits of godliness, etc., and most importantly remember God's great love and mercy so that when you fall, which we all do, we can reach out to Him and others to get back up again. Because we only make progress by getting back up again, and again, and again.

Let's end with seeing how God sets up Elijah's Monday...

### **Slide 16**

Elijah has prayed to die and falls asleep under a broom tree until the angel of the Lord woke him to a meal of hot cake and water. He ate and again fell into an exhausted sleep. The angel of the Lord woke him a second time to eat.

Very basic – but how are your sleep and eating habits. God is concerned that you take care of the body he gave you. The God who sent fire from heaven is telling us to sleep and eat to be who he wants us to be Monday through Saturday.

### **Slide 17**

Revived, Elijah takes a journey of 40 days of both walking and soul searching. [ORANGE line in the map] The period of forty days or years is important in Scripture with themes of hardship, affliction and soul searching, discernment or identity development: The flood in Noah's day lasts forty days as does the fasting of Moses and of course of Jesus in the gospels. The Israelites wander in the wilderness for forty years, and Israel is in the hand of the Philistines for forty years. Forty days is the length of time Ezekiel lies on his side to symbolize the punishment of Judah and Jonah announces God's prophecy that Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days – although the people repent and Nineveh is not destroyed.

**Slide 18**

Part of making it on Monday is having consistent time to sit back with God and reflect on your life in light of His written Word and Living Word – understanding suffering and relationships in light of walking with God in prayer and meditation.

And listen to how Elijah and God talk:

Chapter 19, end of verse 9: And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

11 The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

14 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

I don't think Elijah starts out in a soft, humble voice, but is initially loud, frustrated and probably still mad: "God! What is the [whatever adjective you want to use] matter with

you! I am the only one who ever listens and obeys you; everyone else is a bunch of filthy liars and cheats; and who gets kicked around all day! Me! It's not fair! Where are you! Why aren't you doing anything!?!?"

### Slide 19

Ever feel this way? Ever say this to God? And does God yell back and condemn him?

No.

He shows Elijah where God dwells in the Mondays and Tuesdays of our lives... He is not in the great and powerful wind, the earthquake, or the fire; but a gentle whisper. For all his power, God is still a gentleman and will never force us or others to follow him. He will remind and prompt us, but on Monday, we need to choose to obey him.

And in light of this God asks Elijah again, "what do you want?" And Elijah responds with the same words, but undoubtedly in a different attitude: "Well, I have really been trying to do my best for you, and it's not working. I thought after the fire and killing of the Baal priests everything would be different, but it seems nothing has changed. I don't understand it."

And God answers him by having him focus not on the end product, the eventual outcome, his desires; but on the day-to-day, step-by-step responsibilities, the goals that Elijah can and should do:

### Slide 20

1 Kings 19:15-18 Then the LORD told him, "Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. Then anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from the town of Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet. Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha! 18 Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!"

God is telling Elijah, and us, that to make it on Monday we need to enlist others to help us. We cannot ever make it on our own—he gave us the church for a reason.

### Slide 21

And to realize in those moments of despair, that God is at work around the world and He, not us, is building His Kingdom. Our responsibility is usually right before us, the next small step he wants us to take, and he will empower us for the journey.

Be clear about the difference between

- Goals you are responsible for and that God has promised to help you with
- Deepest desires and longings that are good, yet misplaced can lead us to disappointment and depression.

### Slide 22

And yes, in the world's darkest time, it was Friday, but Sunday came and Jesus saved us in His amazing love. And yes, even now, there are still horrible Fridays, and yet always remember, one day the ultimate Sunday is coming, when Jesus, the Messiah, the King returns in all His Glory!

It's Sunday, but Monday's coming!

Closing Song: *Ancient of Days* [4:44]

Benediction: Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip us with everything good that we may do His will, keep us from stumbling, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, to present us blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.