# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“When the Brook Dries Up”**

**1 King 17:1-9**

 **August 13, 2023**

This morning we will reflect on a story from the life of the prophet Elijah who ministered in Israel during the reign of King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, some 900 years before Christ. Before we get to Elijah’s story, I want to give you a brief background on Ahab and Jezebel by reading 1 Kings 16:29-33.

Ahab son of Omri began to rule over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of King Asa’s reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twenty-two years. But Ahab son of Omri did what was evil in the Lord’s sight, even more than any of the kings before him. And as though it were not enough to follow the sinful example of Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to bow down in worship of Baal. First Ahab built a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria. Then he set up an Asherah pole. He did more to provoke the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him.

Not only had the ruler of Israel turned away from God, but he was flaunting his rebellion by making Baal worship the state religion. Into this situation the prophet Elijah appears, and the beginning of his story is told in 1 Kings 17:1-9.

Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, “As surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives—the God I serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years until I give the word!” Then the Lord said to Elijah, “Go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook, near where it enters the Jordan River. Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food.” So Elijah did as the Lord told him and camped beside Kerith Brook, east of the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook. But after a while the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land. Then the Lord said to Elijah, “Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. I have instructed a widow there to feed you.”

Into the Baal worshippers’ royal court comes Elijah. I can picture him standing there before Ahab and Jezebel, seated on their royal thrones, surrounded by the power and might of their nation, and telling them point-blank: “It’s not going to rain until I say so.” What amazing courage and great faith! One would think that God is ready to send him on a national speaking tour, but instead we read that the Lord tells him to go to Kerith Brook. So, Elijah goes. He believes God’s word that God will provide for him there, with ravens who will bring him food and a brook that will give him water.

Kerith is a place of God’s provision. It is a place where we enjoy the many blessings of God, and we praise him for it. For Elijah, it was food and water during a dangerous and difficult time in his life. For you and me, it may be a place where we enjoy God’s blessing of good health, or financial security, or relational stability, or any of the countless gifts God sends our way. Perhaps Kerith is a consistent 18-year pastorate in which both pastor and congregation are grateful for the ministry to which God has called and blessed them. And, we grow comfortable there. Things are going well. Then, the brook begins to dry up. The very means that God has used to provide for his servant Elijah is about to disappear.

Can any of us relate? Have we not found ourselves in good and pleasant places, enjoying life as it moves along at a comfortable pace, and then suddenly found things changing? We’re not told Elijah’s reaction to the drying up of the brook, but I can’t imagine he was too happy about it. What now, Lord? What am I supposed to do now that you are no longer providing for me? Have you forgotten to keep the water flowing? Have you forgotten about me?

Of course God has not forgotten Elijah. It is simply God’s time for Elijah to move on. Not out of God’s care and provision, but to another place where God will provide, another place where God will bless, another place where Elijah will minister for the Lord.

God has more than one way of supplying what we need. When one dries up, he provides through another. The key for you and me, as it was for Elijah, is to trust the God who provides, not the particular means of provision. It’s easy to get the idea that it’s good health or financial security or relational stability or a steady 18-year pastorate that provides for us. But it’s not. God is the one who provides for us, and each of these is merely the means by which he does so. And, should one change, should one begin to dry up, hold on to the God who provides for he will have another way of caring for you.

In our human weakness, we are tempted to cling to how God has blessed us in the past. But, when we do so, when we put our trust in a good past rather than in God’s promised future, we will miss out on the wonderful plan he has for us. Elijah didn’t get overly attached to Kerith Brook. When God said, “Time to move on,” he moved on. So must we.