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Holy Boldness

1 Kings 17:1-6

Prayer: *Father, I just again thank you for your grace, I thank you for your goodness, and I thank you especially for your word. Lord, I thank you that we can gather corporately to offer up worship to you and song and in recited word, and also Lord, by opening up your book and seeking you for your wisdom. Father, I pray your Holy Spirit would be here, that you would guide us, that you would accompany us as we again look into your book. Again give us the ability to have this word change us and again to make it a permanent part of our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, we are starting a brand new series. We're going to be looking at the life of Elijah. And Elijah was a prophet used mightily at a time when Israel had gone far, far away from the truth. In order to get a sense of what's going on, we need a little historical background first, and what is often very confusing when we look at the Old Testament discussions of the nation of Israel is the fact that Israel in some ways like the United States had it's own type of civil war that produced two very

different nations, two different kingdoms. Just as we had the Yankees in the north and the Confederates in the south, well so, too, Israel was divided into a northern kingdom that kept the name Israel and a southern kingdom that went by the name of 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 19 different kings up to the time that they were taken captive by the Assyrians. And it's not a stretch to say that every one of those kings was pretty much worse than the one before him. Now, the southern kingdom or Judah fared a little bit better. It had 17 kings, half of whom who were good and the other half of whom were wicked. And so the history of Israel at this time reads like this incredibly bad soap opera with kings routinely being assassinated and whole family lines being wiped out and God repeatedly sending prophets to Israel warning them of their wickedness and they being routinely ignored or persecuted.

When we begin to hone in on Elijah's time, we see a culture that is really in an advanced state of spiritual collapse. Here's how scripture described the times leading up to Elijah's appearance. This is *1 Kings 16:23*, it says: *In the first year of Asa, king of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel, and he reigned for twelve years.* Again what may be confusing here is the scripture is describing Israel but it's describing two different kingdoms. Asa

is ruling the southern kingdom of Judah and Omri is reigning in the north over Israel. Verse 25 says: *Omri did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did more evil than all who were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols. In the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years.* That's telling us that Ahab was the successor to Omri who did evil in the sight of the Lord and some 38 years into the reign of Asa over the southern kingdom of Judah, this monster Ahab becomes king of the northern kingdom of Israel. The scripture says in verse 30: *And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him.*

So quickly to sum up, the northern kings are uniformly bad, Omri was the worst of the lot -- well, second worse because it says Ahab, his successor, was even worse. 1 Kings 16 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 not only is Ahab worst of the worst of all the kings, he also introduced a whole new line of idolatry and idol worship to Israel. He marries Jezebel, and in essence Jezebel really is ruling Israel through her weak husband. It was Jezebel who brought in the worship of Baal. In fact Ahab her husband actually built an altar to Baal in Samaria and these -- these folks are without a doubt by God's own reckoning the most evil rulers that Israel had ever had.

You really can't study Elijah's life without knowing the other players in his story, and one of the key players in this story is the wicked king Ahab, and he was truly a piece of work. It's really hard to conceive of a king doing more spiritual damage than Ahab did. I mean, not only did he forsake the worship of the true God, he marries Jezebel of the Sidonians, he takes up the worship of Baal, he goes even further than that, he builds an altar to Baal in the house of Baal and he tops it all off by building an obscene idol to the female God of fertility, Asherah. So God made it clear that: *Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.* He was the worst of the worst, thanks in no small part to the wickedness of the woman that he had married and made queen. And again *1 Kings 21* says: *(There was none who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD like Ahab, whom Jezebel his wife incited. He*

acted very abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the people of Israel.)

So under his leadership, Israel thoroughly embraces idolatry. Instead of holiness, they now embrace wickedness. The very people that God had rescued out of Egypt now want nothing whatsoever to do with him. And so Elijah makes his entrance, and he makes his entrance after years of this idolatry has gone unpunished. And in *1 Kings 17*, it says: *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."* It's the very first that we hear of Elijah. This is his introduction. There's no discussion of his family, no discussion of his heritage, nothing about his history, just a hint of where he had come from. Elijah was from Tishbe in Gilead. And I guess the closest we could come to understanding what an area like that was like would be to suggest it was similar to the outback of Australia. It was said to be a very hard, unforgiving, and unsophisticated place, given to producing hard and unsophisticated people. But that's all the background that we have. That's all we know about Elijah. Really the first time we hear of him he's standing before this wicked king Ahab and he is speaking truth to power.

I don't know if you've ever heard that phrase before, it's a cliché that's been twisted into one of the most abused clichés in American politics. It was a phrase originally coined by the Quakers in the 1950s to represent what they considered the best response to raw power and that was in their view real truth. You know, today if a comedian insults a sitting president at a political dinner, that's considered to be speaking "truth to power." That's not. It is much, much more than that. In fact, the best example I can think of what it really means to speak truth to power took place way back in 1994. It took place when President Clinton was in power and he invited Mother Teresa to the National Prayer Breakfast. Cal Thomas wrote a column about what happened, and he entitled the column "Speaking Truth to Power." This is what he said back in 1994. He said:

"At a National Prayer Breakfast here Thursday, Mother Teresa of Calcutta delivered the most startling and bold proclamation of truth to power I have heard in my more than 30 professional years in Washington. Before an audience of 3,000 that included, among others, the president and vice president" -- obviously that's the power -- "their wives and congressional leaders, the 83-year-old nun who was physically frail but spiritually and rhetorically powerful, delivered an address that cut to the heart of the social ills afflicting America. She said America, once known for

generosity to the world, has become selfish. And she said that the greatest proof of that selfishness is abortion. Tying abortion to growing violence and murder in the streets, she said, 'If we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill each other? Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want.' At that line most of those in attendance erupted in a standing ovation, something that rarely occurs at these sedate events. President Clinton quickly reached for his water glass, and Mrs. Clinton and vice president and Mrs. Gorr stared without expression at Mother Teresa. They did not applaud. It was clearly an uncomfortable moment on the dais. She then delivered the knockout punch: 'Many people are very, very concerned with children in India, with the children of Africa where quite a few die of hunger, and so on. Many people are also concerned about all the violence in this great country of the United States. These concerns are very good. But often these same people are not concerned with the millions who are being killed by the deliberate decision of their own mothers. And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today -- abortion, which brings people to such blindness.' "

See, this frail little nun demonstrated exactly what it means to truly speak truth to power. Elijah took it one step forward.

Elijah spoke truth to power to people who had the power to make him pay dearly for that truth. You see, God's servants historically paid for speaking truth and they paid with life and limb. Hebrews 11:35 says: *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.* God's servants frequently suffered under tyrants, and Ahab and Jezebel were two of the wickedest humans who've ever walked the planet. But Elijah, armed only with his assignment from God, he couldn't care less. He had what I would call holy boldness.

Now, there are three aspects to holy boldness that I would like to look at this morning. The first is a willingness to speak truth to power. The second is a determination to initiate rather than respond. And the third is a willingness to let the consequences fall where they may. First, it's very easy to see Elijah's willingness to speak this truth to power. It's pretty obvious in Mother Teresa as well. But it's not as easy to identify how we speak truth to power. You see, if you're sitting in a school cafeteria and the shyest, least popular kid in the school asks you

about church, is it any different than if the most popular kid comes up to you and says, "I hear you're into Jesus?" If your co-worker asks you about your faith, is it any different than if a person can really affect your place in the company if he asks you the very same question? Is there a difference between your boss and your lowest co-rung co-worker asking you about the gospel? I suggest to you that there is. You see, we all tend to have the same reaction to power. We all tend to be cowed by it. That's what made Mother Teresa's speech so remarkable. The more power a person has, the more difficult it truly is to speak truth to that power. But the gospel is the ultimate truth and God wants it spoken to everyone regardless of their power.

Have you ever thought twice about sharing the gospel based on the status of the person you would be sharing it with? See, what makes what Elijah said so profoundly courageous is that Ahab and Jezebel had the means and they certainly had the desire to torture and execute him simply for saying it. In fact, we can see that in the very next instruction that Elijah receives from the Lord in verse 2, it says: *And the word of the LORD came to him: "Depart from here and return eastward and hide yourself from the brook Cherith which is east of the Jordan."* Elijah was willing to take that ultimate risk.

The second thing that we notice about Elijah's holy boldness is that he did the initiating. He's the one who went walking right into the lion's den. He didn't say, "Well, God, if they come to me and they ask me why they're so wicked and why they've forsaken the Lord, well then I'll surely let them have it." No. Elijah brought the message of God's judgment to them. Perhaps you're thinking that God may have called Elijah to speak to kings and queens, but he certainly hasn't called me to anything even remotely like that. I mean, have you ever thought to yourself what difference could I possibly make? Let me give you one example. Matt Chandler is a pastor of a 10,000 member mega-church located outside of Dallas, a church known as The Villages. He's also the head of Acts 29 which is a church planting organization responsible for over 500 new churches, and he's the author of a terrific new book called: *The Explicit Gospel*. And in that book he describes us coming to faith in Christ and he describes it as a direct result of the courage of just one guy who just happened to have the locker next to his in high school. This is what he says in his book: "As my family moved from the Bay Area to Texas I ended up by the grace of God having a high school locker next to a junior named Jeff Faircloth. Jeff was aggressive about his faith. He had a deep love for the Lord. In fact, he began to share the gospel with me almost immediately, saying, 'Hey, I need to tell you about Jesus. When do you want to do that?' He was going to let me decide where we had

the conversation, but having the conversation was not up for debate."

Well, what if Jeff had decided instead, well, if that new guy with the locker next to me wants to ask me about Jesus, I'll be happy to tell him anything he needs to know. Really now, how many of us have had folks come up to us and ask us to explain to them the gospel? Well, my guess is we could count those situations on one hand because no one seeks for God. You and I came to Christ because the Good Shepherd chose us, and the way he chose us was always through other human beings. The fact is, the great commission says in *Matthew 28*: "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" Now the operative word in that statement is the imperative "go". We have effectively translated it into *1 Peter 3:15* which says: *Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.* Listen, they are both necessary and they're both good. But one is proactive and the other reactive. I am thrilled when people ask me about the gospel, but those questions are almost never asked in a vacuum. Something or someone has to initiate a response, and holy boldness takes the initiative. Whether it was making new wine at a

wedding party or sitting with a woman at the well or having lunch with a tax collector named Zacchaeus, we know Jesus was the model of what it takes to take the initiative.

So how do we do that? Well, many of you know I've been going to Planet Fitness for about two and a half years and I go rather religiously three times a week because I'm trying to forestall my body falling apart, without much luck, I should add. But shortly before I decided I was going to go, it had just opened up and one of my daughters had given me a t-shirt from Voice of the Martyrs which I have, this is the t-shirt, and she had, you know, just given it to me 'cause she thought it was a nice t-shirt, and it says on the front, it's very provocative, it says: "This shirt is illegal in 53 countries." It doesn't tell you why; it just says that. And then on the back, it says: "I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God to everyone who believes." They also have a brand new one which I wanted to show you that just came out, this is their newest. I think this came out two weeks ago. You'd be familiar with that. That's what we have on the front of the building and on the back. It just is the website, says "I-am-N," in case you don't know this is the Arabic letter "N" which stands for "Nazarene," which is spray painted -- as you can see this looks like spray paint -- it's spray painted on the homes of Christians so that they will know these are the ones to

persecute or execute or kick out of the country. So I had been given these t-shirts or a t-shirt by my daughter, and the thought just popped in my head, I said, well, why -- I'll just wear this to the gym. Now, I have to be honest with you. At the very same moment another thought popped in my head or should I say a series of thoughts popped into my head. First one was: "What if they tell me I can't wear this?" Or "What if this makes a scene?" Or "What if they think I'm shoving my religion down their throat?" Well, I thought about it and I decided, well, if I'm going to go to the gym, I may as well make what I'm wearing there something that counts for something. So for the last two and a half years I've made it my business to make that t-shirt my gym uniform just like in high school when you had your gym uniform. I have five of them, so I just rotate them all the time. I wear it every time I go. I wanted to be known as the guy who wears that t-shirt. It's always fascinating to me to walk around the gym and catch people constantly trying to read my shirt without catching my eyes. I'm always catching people kind of backing away from my eyes trying to read what's going on on the shirt. And I should tell you that I've been counting, and over the last two and a half years I've had 15 different people come up to me, and 15 out of 15 have been overwhelmingly encouraging, supportive. I was in one room working on a machine, and I forget that I'm wearing it, I've done it for so long, and this great big guy full of tattoos, huge muscle guy just

comes up and he starts looking at me. I stopped and I was kind of like, "Can I help you?" He said, "Would you turn around?" And I said, "Sure." So I turned around, and he read. So I turned back around, he says, "I just want to shake your hand." Great. Shook my hand. I was there on Friday and I was wearing my latest shirt, two women came up to me and they just said, "I've got to ask you what this shirt is all about," they said, "I saw you last week with that shirt and I made a note to ask you what it was about." So I had the opportunity to explain to her what the letter meant, what it was all about, and what persecution means to Christians around the world. She said she was a Christian and she was complaining that her church had spent the last year and a half kind of dodging around the issue and at last they were starting to address it. I just thought all of this ability to speak about the gospel just from wearing a t-shirt. Now, I would hardly call that holy boldness but it's at least a start.

Just last week the quarterback of the Washington Redskins, RGIII, for those of you who are not into football, he was going to a post game press conference, and he was wearing a t-shirt. I think we have a -- do you have that up there? I just wanted to -- rather than have to explain to you. I'm sure you're familiar with that t-shirt. And he was wearing that t-shirt in the room beforehand, and when he got to the press conference, he was wearing the same

t-shirt turned inside out. And so a big controversy erupted and there's two different sides saying what's what and the NFL was saying, no, no, no, it wasn't a Nike product and if it's not a Nike product, we won't support it. Other people said we know exactly why you don't want that message going out to anyone. So to me, what was important about this was it was a public recognition of this quarterback of who he was and who he believed in. And I think in a day when everyone feels the need to aggressively assert whatever view they have about anything, perhaps it is time for us to assert our view about the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

It's also time to realize that folks are not going to come up to you and ask about the gospel unless they have an inkling that the gospel is something of meaning to you. I mean, is it really enough to be willing to defend your faith when you know no one's ever going to ask you about it? Elijah certainly didn't wait for a truth request that never would have come from Ahab and Jezebel. And I think if you're waiting for somebody to come up to you and ask you about the gospel, you're going to have a long wait indeed. So part of holy boldness is being intentionally proactive when it comes to presenting the gospel and many times that means being intentional about starting conversations that can end with the gospel. And even a lowly bumper sticker can start a conversation. I mean, one thing you notice driving down the average highway is

that folks have no problem whatsoever expressing their views on the bumpers of their cars. It's also a place that we can express our view of the gospel and very often we can express it very badly, I think. I know I've seen more than a few Christian bumper stickers that have made me wince. And if you only have a few words to say to somebody, perhaps the best idea would be to let scripture itself do the speaking. I would much rather see a bumper sticker that says: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" than one that says: "Choose Christ or you're going to burn in hell." You know, that may be the truth but I'm not sure that's the best possible way to express it. But understand something. I'm not saying if you're a Christian you've got to go out and buy bumper stickers. What I'm saying is that as a Christian we need to be far more intentional about being willing to start conversations that end in the opportunity for us to present the gospel. And if a bumper sticker does that for you, then go for it.

Another way to get a conversation started even if you're not there is through tracts. You know, it's always wise to carry a tract or two in your wallet that you could leave in a restaurant or give to a clerk. I know Paul McCardel and Tom Brozycki have used tracts very effectively for years now, and Paul has got a bunch of tracts that he wants to bring to us, and if you're interested in that, we'd be happy to help you with that. They do the work of

presenting the gospel, all you have to do is get them in the hands of people who need to hear them. But whether it's t-shirts, whether it's bumper stickers, or tracts, what is far more important is our attitude toward sharing the gospel. If you're not intentional in your desire to be obedient to the great commission, then the world will have very effectively shut you up.

If the whole idea of starting a conversation like this seems out of bounds to you, consider again what I've read before, what I believe needs repeating. It's what Nik Ripken said in his book *The Insanity of God* about speaking up when it costs you something. This is what he says. He says: "Why is it that millions of the global followers of Jesus who actively practice their faith live in environments where persecution is the norm? The first and most basic answer is that these people have given their lives to Jesus. The second answer is that they have determined in their hearts that they will not keep Jesus to themselves. Having found faith in Christ, they have such a passion for Jesus that they must share the good news of his sacrificial love and forgiveness with their families, their friends, and their neighbors. By doing that, these believers are choosing to be persecuted. What that means is that, for most believers, persecution is completely avoidable. If someone leaves Jesus alone, doesn't seek him or follow him, then persecution will simply not happen. Beyond that, even if someone

becomes a follower of Jesus, persecution will likely not happen if the faith is kept private and personal. If a person is silent about their faith in Jesus, the chance of being persecuted is very small. So if our goal is reducing persecution, that task is easily achieved. First, just leave Jesus alone. Second, if you do happen to find Him, just keep Him to yourself. Persecution stops immediately where there is no faith and where there is no witness. The reason for persecution, then, is that people keep finding Jesus -- and, then, they refuse to keep Him to themselves."

See, there really are only two reasons why people do not share the gospel. One of them is ignorance and the other is fear. Ignorance comes in two versions, there's vincible ignorance and there is invincible ignorance. And invincible ignorance is something you would never be held responsible for. R.C. Sproul once described it as going through a green light in some backwoods town only to find out in this town in order to make a lot of money writing tickets, red now means go and green now means stop. If you got pulled over for something like that, you'd be the victim of invincible ignorance, ignorance you couldn't conquer, it's something that you'd have no responsibility. If you went to court, you'd never be held responsible for those kind of traffic laws because no one would expect you to know that in this place red means go and green means stop. Now, it's possible, I suppose, that there are people

who have heard the gospel and have poorly understood it and somehow never got the urgency of sharing that gospel. Those few folks who may have an invincible ignorance about the gospel, well, they will not be held responsible for not sharing it, but the vast majority of us know that we are blessed with this grace in order to bless others with it as well. So ignorance is never an excuse.

And that leaves the only other alternative to why we don't share the gospel as fear. And this leads to my third point about Elijah's holy boldness. You see, Elijah was willing to let the consequences fall where they may because his ultimate trust was in the God that he was representing. I mean, he put his life on the line because he knew that his life was in God's hands. And that doesn't mean that Elijah didn't have fear, I mean, at this point in his life we see nothing but profound courage, but we know, we know that later on Elijah gave in to fear himself. Truth be told, it is fear that stops most of us from sharing the gospel. Last week we spoke about the ultimate fruit of the Spirit which is love. We said the only way to effectively grow the agape love that God wants for us is to be willing to die to yourself, and the only way that you're willing to die to yourself is if you believe that God is not going to abandon you to that death. If you trust that God is not going to leave you buried but that he will raise you up precisely because you've been willing to humble yourself. You grow in agape

love every time you risk humbling yourself only to find out that God is real, that God longs to lift you up. You can't find a more practical application of that principle than when you share the gospel. Now I know it is a fearful thing for many, I know it can be a humbling thing, but I know it can also be the opportunity for you to feel dead and buried and wondering if God is going to raise you up, but here's the point. Until you're willing to risk that death, until you're willing to risk that burial, you are never going to see the hand of God raising you up. And one great way of pressing through that fear is to actually see God's hand at work is by taking the risk of sharing the gospel. We make a million excuses for why we can't do that, we're not smart enough, we're not knowledgeable enough, we're not confident enough, we're not cool enough. God understands every one of those fears. He wants you to understand that if you give those fears to him, he can show you more of his presence than you ever thought possible. There is nothing that can compare to the privilege of sharing the gospel with another fallen human being. Sad to say, some of you have never had that privilege. For some it's been circumstance, for others it's been ignorance, but for most of us, I think we can agree it has been fear. Perfect love casts out fear. First can I assure you that a sovereign God is quite capable of handling any missteps you think you might make when you share the gospel. "I love Jesus because he saved my life" may be all the gospel you're

able to say. But God would be delighted to use that as a starting point to build the gospel into someone else's life. You see, it starts with first acknowledging my fear before God. I didn't want to wear a t-shirt to the gym because I thought somebody's going to make a fuss. The point is every one of us have those fears. We just can't allow them to stop us and we know that God is determined to use us in spite of those fears.

And so let's look at these fears as they accumulate. The first fear is that fear of speaking truth to power. Well, Elijah spoke the absolute truth to the ultimate power of his day. The gospel is that ultimate truth. God has descended to earth, he's taken on flesh, he's lived the perfect life and then offered his life as a substitute for our life of sin. We are the rebels who fled from God and God in his mercy pursued us and laid down his life in order to ransom us. That's the essence of the gospel. But here's the point we really have to grasp. The gospel itself is power. The gospel has its own power to accomplish what it needs to accomplish. All you have to do is unleash that power is to share it. I mean, *Romans 1:16* on the back of my shirt: *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

Now, the second fear is the fear of initiating rather than

responding. Elijah was willing to walk into the valley of the shadow of death. God has not asked that of us yet. Most of us are willing to give a defense to the gospel but a few of us are willing to go on offense, to initiate conversations that might lead to sharing the gospel, and part of committing to going on offense is simply taking the steps that I've outlined, whether it's a simple bumper sticker, a tract, or even a t-shirt. Maybe it's intentionally joining a bowling team or a knitting club so you can have the opportunity to share the gospel with whomever God gives you. It's understanding every single encounter that you have with a stranger as a divinely inspired encounter that maybe is there that has been ordained for all times so that you can run into this person and give him the gospel. It's seeing people and understanding that from the get-go. This is what you're here for. And so any simple encounter -- you can send up a two-second prayer, Lord, if this is the time, give me the opportunity. It's the attitude of the heart that matters.

The third fear is the fear of letting consequences fall where they may. See, Elijah had to know that there were other prophets who spoke on behalf of God who met endings that were far less than pleasant. He had to know that he was insulting and accusing the most powerful and the most wicked people he would ever meet, but somehow none of that matters. What mattered was the instructions

he was given from God. Again, *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."* This is just the opening throwdown of what would be an epic battle between the forces of evil and the forces of good. We're going to spend a couple of months looking at that battle. Chances are that God has not called us to stand before tyrants and kings and queens but he has called us to bring the good news of the gospel to each and every sphere of influence we occupy. And so if fear is stopping you, there's a simple solution: Confess that fear as sin. Confess it as sin and let God's grace heal and restore you. Commit to being God's voice to a world that looks more and more and more like the world that Elijah walked in. I mean, God was in charge then, he is still in charge now, and God has great plans for every one of us. As Jesus said in *Luke 12: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* Let's pray.

Father, I do thank you and praise you for the privilege that you have placed in our hands. We have the privilege of bringing the story, the hope of eternal life to a world that is dying, to a world that is on its way to hell itself. Lord, we have know idea of the gift that we have been given. We have no idea of the extent of it. We walk around and we see through a glass darkly, Lord, and

I just pray that you would give us the ability to perceive the enormity of it if we can't see it in detail. Father, I pray you would give us a holy boldness, give us a determination to use the wisdom that you've given us and the means that you've given us through prayer to approach each and every situation in our lives as seeing the gospel being presented there as a premiere importance. Give us the passion to do that, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.