

Meeting the Demands of the Gospel

By
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“. . . bake me thereof a little cake first” (I Kings 17:13)

[Editor’s note: We date this sermon sometime during World War II because he references “this war” and speaks of survivors who are “shipwrecked or stranded on some island” which sounds like stories of war action in the Pacific and of “the starving children in Europe” which reminds of the European theater of war.]

The famine was sore in the land. For many months there had been neither rain or dew. The rivers, lakes, and fountains were dried up. Cattle were starving, men were dying, and all hope of survival was about gone. The only man in Israel who could get hold of God could not be found. Ahab with all of his search parties was combing the country, but there was no trace of the Tishbite. Yonder by the little brook Cherith, the man of God was fed by the ravens and drank from the spring. It, too, finally dried up, but the moment it was gone, the Lord spoke and sent him to the widow’s house and told him that she would take care of him.

It was very discouraging when he was greeted with the words, “I’m gathering sticks to prepare the last cake for me and my child and then we are going to die.” But the Lord directed him to say, “Bake me a little cake first.” This was a strange request. Here was a man whom she had never seen, standing at her door asking her to give him the last thing that she has to sustain life. To her that cake meant a few more days of life, a few more hours when she would not hear her baby cry for food.

Many stories come to us out of this war of men and women who are shipwrecked or stranded on some island who have guarded a few pieces of bread with a fiendish

vigilance. Nothing is so precious as a piece of bread when one is starving (the starving children in Europe).

She has watched her meal go down, down in the barrel. She has seen her oil diminish with tearful hopelessness. No market, no money, no hope. At last the final hour has come. She tells her little boy the sad news. She begins to gather the sticks. The man of God appears and with scant introduction he says, "Bake me a little cake first." This brings into play some of the greatest teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. This old story from the distant past is dusty with age, but it shines with a principle that alone can save the church of the Twentieth Century. It shows in substance what Jesus was teaching when he said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven." "Take no thought for yourself, what ye shall eat or drink or what wherewithal ye shall be clothed."

It is a true estimate of how God values things when they are brought into the light of the eternal. Men want to live. They struggle, plead, fight, and pray to live, but there is something else more important than life. There are certain demands imposed upon the followers of Jesus Christ. God has a pattern and has set up a standard. The demands have gone out. It is in the form of an ultimatum. God does not force or coerce. He simply makes the statement and leaves it up to us: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven."

In the case of Cain: God, before Cain was born, set up a standard of worship. When Cain came to offer his sacrifice, he brought something good, but he ignored the explicit demands of God and his sacrifice was rejected.

In the case of the rich man and Lazarus at his gate: God would not alter his plan for the miserable cries of a man in Hell. God's plan was repentance, and he would not cause one to go from the dead to please one man.

Fundamental in the first code of laws God gave was that unalterable commandment: Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

My Time:

To whom does it belong? God gave you every bit of it. The rich man had time to pray and seek God and time to be kind to the likes of Lazarus. But in Hell, it was too late. There are people hanging in the twilight of two worlds today that can look back upon the past and would give the world for one moment of time to give to God.

My Money

God must come first in this also. We leave God out until we see if we have anything left to give. We often give God what we can get along without. Sometimes we prosper. Sometimes we suffer. Whether we have plenty or whether we are counting out our last pennies, God asks for his part. Through Elijah, God asked the widow to give God his part first.

My Service:

Jesus went to the fig tree for fruit.

It is usefulness that counts.

God saves us for service. Our jobs, our pleasures, our own needs are not to come between us and our service to God. It means everything to feel clean inside and not ashamed of yourself, to be able to stand up and look the world in the eye and know that you are on a special mission. It is easy to forget that we are here for something great and worthwhile. That's why so many men in the army crack up. They lose their bearings and think about themselves instead of their mission.

Why don't you be something, stand up and do something worthwhile. When you walk the street people will say, "There goes somebody who is going somewhere." Where are you headed? Look at your tomorrows. Look at the time when your sun will be hanging in the evening sky, when this old world will be slipping away. What will you see? A life of service? A life of time spent for God? A life of seeking God first? (Like Jacob in Egypt).

[Editor's note: This sermon ends abruptly. There are no notes associated with the last statement in parenthesis – like Jacob in Egypt. We can assume that he drew from Genesis 47-50 about the promises and purposes of God as they relate to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and especially Jacob's view of the future in the light of his past.]