

# BELPRES CHURCH

## **You've Heard It Said**

### **1 Kings 19, Romans 11:5-6, John 14:12-14**

Speaker: Voula Champeridou-Antouan

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For whomever doesn't know me, I'm Voula and I'm coming from Greece. And along with my husband, we have founded an organization and the church at the same time, Bridges, which is serving among the Arabic-speaking refugees and asylum seekers that are coming from Middle East for different reasons.

Before I start sharing, I want to share something different because I understand that many people now, they're looking to Bridges and we all say that God has put mightily his hands upon this ministry and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people, they have given their heart to Jesus, 99% from Muslim background and they have been baptized and now they are in Europe and we are praying for them to plan new churches. But it's not always so big as we see. I believe that God, before he entrusted us with lots of talents, he gives us one so that he's going to see how do we do this?

How we work with this one talent and he's giving this to every one of us. Everyone. There is no person here that doesn't have a gift. There is no person that has not been entrusted by talent by God to work on this and make it fruitful. So a few months ago, my husband received a phone call by a person from Syria and this man was telling him, "Hey, do you remember me," and all this. Elia said, "I'm not really sure." Then this guy said, "Let me send you a picture." So he sends a picture and my husband got crazy to see this picture. And he told me. Let me tell you the story about this.

Many, many years ago, even before we got married, he was at his house alone and he was already a believer, but even he was a young believer wherever he was going, he

wanted to serve Christ. He was doing this no matter what. So this guy somehow heard about him and one day he went to his small studio and he sat down and said, "Are you Elias? And what are all these things that you are saying?" So Elias had him down. He had his hand around him and start sharing the love of Christ with him.

And at the end, actually, he led him to Jesus. When Elias did this, this man reached to his back pocket and he took a knife and put it on the table. So Elia said, "What is this?" And he said, "Actually, this is what I have bought before I came here and I have bought this knife for you because I believe that you were a cult. And I came actually to kill you." So when this happened, Elias had already led him to Jesus.

So he said, "Can I buy this knife for you? You have spent money for this. I don't want to let you go out with this. So how much did you pay? Here, have this money and I want to keep this knife." So this man left with Christ and 30 years later he's calling Elias to tell him, "Here I am, and in the middle of Syria and in the middle of war and earthquake and everything I'm working in planting churches." It was one single action, nothing more, which was actually forgotten.

The man had to send the picture. It was forgotten. But I'm starting with this story for all of us to think, "What are these single actions in our lives that we do not pay attention or we're very much hesitant to do them, but if we did, we can literally change the whole history of this world." So today we're going to speak about caves. And what do I mean by this?

We all remember the story of Elijah and how ... 1 Kings 19 and how he gathered the prophets, Jezebel's prophets altogether, and he mocked them and he mocked their God and he brought fire from heaven. And at the end he killed all the prophets. And after this, after such a success, he goes and he hides himself into a cave. Why? He feels alone. He feels very scared because Jezebel has threatened him that now he's going to kill him and he feels like he's the only prophet that has been left into Israel.

So what else to do? He goes and he hides himself into a cave because he just feels very, very, very abandoned. And now we read two times in verses nine and 13 that God is reaching out to him and ask him two times the same question, "What are you doing there, Elijah? What are you doing? I have walked with you all this time. We have done all these miracles. You killed these prophets. I brought the fire under this water land and you are hiding yourself. What are you doing?" And two times He's asking him the same question and the answer is the same, "I have been very jealous, but now everyone has abandoned you and I am scared for my life."

We understand that the world that we're living is very wicked. It's very materialistic. And sometimes we feel very scared, very fearful. We feel like we are alone and how can we

go and to meet all these people and share the gospel and stand for Jesus and bring His world. But we must think that Elijah, a little before he had this encounter with Jesus. And my question is, do we have this encounter with Jesus? Have we allowed God to change our life? Has there ever been a point that you and me, we remember in our life that this was the cutting point in my life and this is how God changed me. If we had this, then why are we hiding? Why are we hiding in our caves right now?

Why? If we have seen God strong in our life, what are we doing? And then God is calling him out and says the same thing, "What are you doing? We are not done. Okay, the prophets are killed, but I'm not done. I'm not done because in Israel there are seven thousands that they have not bowed their need to bow. So we are not done here." So the question here is, what is our cave? From what are we hiding today? What is the cave that it makes us feel very safe? Is it our family? Is it our church, our career, our job, our tradition, our culture? We're all hiding somehow.

But what is our cave? Because if we do not understand this, then we shall never take the step and go out and say, "Here I am Lord, here I am," because this is from where God is calling us. God has never called us and give us a spirit of cowardice to be afraid and be scared of any kind of Jezebel around our life. But He has called us to go out and live for Christ and live the abandoned life and the power that He has given us to live.

So the whole world is actually waiting for us. The whole world is waiting for you and me to go out and shake it upside down. And what are we doing? We are hiding. We cannot. This is not the purpose that we have been called in this life. We have been called to go out and because I believe that when God said to Elijah, "Come, come on the mountain, just get out. I want to have an encounter with you." God wants to have the same encounter with us. And now we have to choose. If God is telling you, "Come because I want to meet you." It's up to you if you're going to move out from your cave or not.

Do you want to go and have the encounter with Jesus or you prefer to stay to the safety of your cave? Whatever it is. But God is calling each and every one of us. There is no one here, no one on this earth who loves Jesus and has surrendered himself to God that has not been called to have an encounter with Him and meet Him up on the mountains so that he's going to have his life transformed and be used by God to go and shake the world. There is no one. And that includes you and me. So God is calling us now the same way that he has called Elijah. And what he's doing with Elijah is that come out on the mountain because I'm going to go and speak to you. And He takes him through political religion changes that he would do.

He tells to Elijah, "Just go and anoint other kings, just going and anoint another prophet. Why? Because I have seven more thousand that they have not bowed their need to vow."

So there is a remnant here. There are many more people that they are not worship a false God. And we hear the other time that every few seconds, 85 people are going to hell. Over there, there are millions, millions that they are craving.

They are shouting for hope. They are shouting for Jesus, even if they don't know that it is Jesus whom they need, but their heart is empty. So they're looking for a real God. They're looking for the truth and who is going to take the truth to them if it's not going to be you and me? There is no other way. There is no other way. I mean, this is why we are called. This is why we're called.

How can we stay scared and how can we say, "Act less," to know that we have the truth, we have the power, we have the authority by Jesus, He has sent us and we stay back. We cannot. We all have a huge responsibility. Paul, in Romans 11:5 and 6, he says that, "At the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace, not on the basis of works."

And I believe that in heaven we're going to have lots of surprises. We are going to see people that we didn't expect that we would be there because they have been saved by the grace of the Lord and not by the works that we think in our mind that they have to go through in order to have eternal life. And unfortunately, we are not going to see people that we thought that, "Yeah, definitely I'm going to sit at the same table with him or her in heaven."

We are going to have all these surprises and we have to be prepared because also we want heaven to be full. We want heaven to be full, but we have to work for this. We have to get out and bring these millions that they're getting close every second and every day. And how are we going to reach these people if we do not go out and we keep staying to our safe environment? We cannot.

At the Gospel of John 14:12-14, Jesus is encouraging his disciples because He's leaving and He tells them, "I'm going to the Father, but the works that I have done the same and greater than them, you are going to do." This was not a word just for the disciples at this time because we are also disciples of Jesus Christ. So if we consider ourselves today as disciples of Jesus Christ, then it means that Jesus has told us, "I give you the authority and I tell you to go to make works greater, greater than the ones that I have already done."

Our task today is to go and continue the work that Jesus Christ has started because if we call ourselves disciples, then it means that we have to do what our master did. This is a disciple. It's not someone who is sitting except if his master is sitting. But our Jesus was not sitting. He was not. He was preaching, he was teaching, he was discipling people. He was gathering them in community. He was laying hands and bring healing to them. He was breaking comfort. This is what Jesus was doing. And us as disciples of our master, we have to do the same. And this is because Jesus said so. And he also said that,

"I'm not going to leave you alone. I'm going to the Father and I'm going to tell him to send you the Holy Spirit so that you will not be alone."

So he has empower us. He has given his spirit to be encouraged, to be empowered, to be gifted, to be brave in order to go out. We have not been called to fill in these chairs. This is not our call. This is the time that we're coming together to bless each other, to be taught, to be fed spiritually, to meet with all of our family and then go out and continue what Jesus did. This is what we are called. Church is not on Sunday, church is a 24/7. It's not only on Sundays because we continue to be children of God and family of God every hour and every minute of every day of the week because this is what the commission of Jesus Christ is.

And this is why we are here today. This is why we are here because Jesus told us, "Go," and we have to go. And if we see to the Old Testament and the New Testament, it's full of this, the great mission that we read at the book of Matthew. It's not only there, the whole other Bible, we see that God was looking for people to send. He sent Abraham, he sent Moses, he was looking to the prophets to sent. He was sending the people to do what? To speak to the nations and bring them back to Him, bring them back to God.

And he's doing the same thing with us today. And if we remember Isaiah, when God said, "Whom shall I send?" Isaiah said, "Here I am God." But before this, before God said, "Whom do we send?" Isaiah had an encounter with God and in this encounter he said that, "My lips are dirty. I need to be cleansed." And the angel came and touched him with a call. Our lives have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. So do we continue to have this encounter with God? Do we allow Jesus Christ to saturate our life? Or do we prefer to stay in this small little life that we have?

But this is not our life. We have not been born to live in a box. God wants us to get out and enjoy the abandoned life that he has for us. Enjoy the miracles that he has for us. Enjoy the power that he has for us. Enjoy the joy, His joy that he has already prepared for us. So let's have this encounter with issues. Let's allow Him to be filled with the authority that he has given us.

So then when He says, "Whom do I send?" Whom do we send? And who is going to raise his hand leaving behind his life, leaving behind maybe career, country, family, tradition, culture, whatever it takes, and say, "Here I am Lord," because this is our call and this is how I want to leave you today. It doesn't mean big or mean small ministries, but it is an everyday and every minute call to say, "Here I am Lord."

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### **Discussion Questions:**

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*Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.*

**Opening Question:** Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do you feel when you read this scripture (excited, angry, worried, etc....)? Why do you think that is? (Explain in your group and then take that response to Jesus in prayer this week.)
- As you read this scripture, where does it challenge your current cultural context?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What is something that stood out to you as you heard Voula preach?
- Did anything you heard in Voula's sermon help you to think about discipleship in a new or different way? How might this change the way you live your life as a Jesus follower?

**Closing Question and Application:** Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

**Closing group prayer:** Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.