

1 Kings 19:1-8

August 8, 2021

It is good that in the Scriptures God reveals to us that the mighty men and women of old, even great prophets such as Elijah, were very much affected by the troubles around them and also by the troubles and emotions within them. We should not think it is strange, therefore, for us to be affected in similar ways; that we do not fit in with God's people because of how troubled we are within and without. Above all, we should not think that God is ashamed to be called our God when the way we think and behave makes us ashamed of ourselves.

Are there not times when we act on our fears as we see Elijah doing in our text? Are there not times when, like him, we have nothing left, and we tell God, "*It is enough!* I cannot go on." And are we ashamed to admit that there are times when we also wish that God would send His angel, not to feed us and strengthen us, but to whisk us into heaven away from everything that is so troubling and so exhausting?

But then we might respond: Is not that what summer vacations are for? Are they not times of refreshing for us to get away and recharge?

Elijah was on such a vacation. He got away from Jezebel who was hunting him to kill him. Yet even when he was safely out of reach, resting himself under a broom tree, he pleaded with God, not to strengthen him and refresh him, but to take his life.

Wherever we go, whether for a long weekend or a week-long vacation, although we can get away from the troubles without, we cannot get away from the troubles within, for we cannot get away from ourselves. The real problem facing Elijah was not Jezebel, but himself. The troubles without were little compared to the troubles within him.

There are people we try to avoid in life. We all do this. Elijah was avoiding Queen Jezebel. We have our own Jezebels. And whether they are seeking our life or just making our life unpleasant, we do what it takes to avoid such people. Some switch their gym membership. Some go to a different store for their groceries. Some to a different church. Even pastors do this. Fed up with all the troubles, they seek a call to a different congregation. Yet here, too, they encounter Jezebels, and if they are wise, they learn that the troubles around them are tamed by dealing with the troubles within them.

God's angel brought food and water to Elijah. Twice he awakened him and said, "*Arise and eat.*" And then the angel said to Elijah, "*The journey is too great for you.*"

And so it was! It was a journey lasting forty days and forty nights. For such a journey, we would bring scads of food and water with us. Yet Elijah makes the journey eating and drinking only what God's angel gives him under the broom tree.

The journey was too great for Elijah, not because of Jezebel, but because of him. He was lacking within himself what it would take to make the journey. And so are we. Rather than pointing to people around us and saying, "They are the reason I am so exhausted! Because of them I cannot go on any longer..." we should be pointing to ourselves, "I am the reason why I am so exhausted. My journey through life is too great for me, not because of them, but because of me."

And so God must deal with us. And He does this through Confession and Absolution. Our sinfulness prevents us from completing our journey. Not the sins of others, but our own sins. You and I lack within ourselves what it takes to deal with our own sinfulness. Yet we try. We minimize our sins. We brush them off like a piece of lint. We ignore them. But nothing works. We end up exhausting ourselves. Yet we blame everyone but ourselves for our exhaustion.

Elijah did not hide his shame from God. *"I am no better than my fathers,"* he confessed. We must do the same. We must freely admit, "I am a poor, wretched sinner. I cannot go on because of me."

"Arise and eat," said God's angel to Elijah. And he arose and ate and went on his journey in the strength of that food. No one on earth prepared that food for Elijah. It came down from heaven for him.

And so for you. Jesus says, *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven."* The food and drink we consume each day sustain us for that day. But it cannot carry us through to the completion of our journey. We need Jesus. We need Him who already made the journey for us, who gave His life up for you on the cross.

And so today God's angel, His messenger, says to you, *"Arise and eat."* Eat with your ears the word of Absolution: You are forgiven. You, dear wretched sinner, are forgiven of all your sins. And then eat with your mouth the food and drink God has prepared for you. Arise and come to His holy table. Take and eat, take and drink. This is Jesus, the Bread of Life for you. This is your God who comes to you with pardon. No matter how shamefully you have behaved, He is not ashamed to be called your God.

The journey is too great for you. But it is not too great for Jesus. And so, through the food and drink that comes down from heaven for you, Jesus comes to live within you. And like Elijah, you will complete your journey through life. Amen.