

August 9, 2015
Sermon The Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
1 Kings 19:1-8

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

1 Kings 19:1–8 (ESV)

¹ Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” ³ Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴ But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” ⁵ And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.” ⁶ And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.” ⁸ And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Elijah thought the people of Israel *finally* got it. At the end of the last chapter of 1st Kings the Israelites said: "*The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God,*" (1 Ki 18:39).

At Elijah's prayer, God sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice of a bull, the kindling wood, the stones of the altar, and the water he had poured over it.

At Elijah's command, the people slaughtered 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah then told King Ahab to mount his chariot and leave because it was to rain and end a three-year drought. And it happened just as the prophet said. Finally, all his work had been rewarded.

Except nothing had changed. The queen, Jezebel, was not repentant but angry, threatening to kill the prophet on top of all the others that she had had killed.

Now, *that* seemed to be it for Elijah! The people had forsaken God's covenant, broken down His altars, and killed His prophets.

Elijah thought he was alone. So he left Israel, crawled under a tree, and asked God to take his life.

God always answers our prayers, but sometimes in much better ways than we ask.

Certainly in this case. Far better than Elijah asked.

For him just as for us, the Lord has the real answer for our discouragement.

When we work hard but do not see results, we sometimes become discouraged (vv 1–4). No matter what we try, we seem to have little or no success. We fail.

Whether it be in our daily lives, or jobs, our families, or even our evangelism. We just don't seem to be making any headway.

We love the Lord and, like Elijah, want God's kingdom—and our congregation here—to grow.

So we pray. We attend every worship service. We volunteer to teach Sunday School, to usher and to do any number of things in the church.

We give generously of our income, working to help finance God's work on earth, starting right here in Bowie.

Yet the congregation never grows, and there are always budget concerns. If there isn't an actual concern, we make one up. We worry about the future rather than trusting that God has it all in hand.

Whether we make our own problems or whether they are effecting us right now. They are there. We don't really know what to do next, or where to turn.

So we become frustrated. We read the advice of others. We try new programs. We urge our church's members to do more. We even try to be better at the roles God has given us to do in church.

Yet it looks as if everything we've ever done was a waste of time.

Why bother?

We start to feel like Elijah and we give up and go and lay under a tree.

Calling out to the Lord, saying:

“It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.”

What we often forget is that we cannot make our congregation grow by our own efforts. It is the Spirit’s work anyway.

We are sinful humans, living in a sinful world. This physically limits what we can do. Our energy is not endless, human talent is limited, and both we and the people inside and outside our church are sinners.

While our work may surely succeed from time to time, it will eventually fail. Unfortunately that’s just how it is. But you see...

God does not call us to be successful, but to be faithful.

After all, it is Jesus who saves. It is the Holy Spirit who calls us by the Gospel and enlightens us with His gifts.

He calls us to hear God’s Word, to use in faith the gifts He gives us, to love Him and our neighbors, to witness to His love in Jesus, to cherish and receive the Sacraments He gives us.

When we try to do others things, we are, at best, doing things God has not commanded us to do. And when we expect things to happen because of our own efforts, we may well burn out, sooner or later. At times like these—

But when we are discouraged, Christ Himself will raise us up.

The Lord gives Elijah his better answer (vv 5b–8).

As God had fed His people Israel in the desert with manna, as God the Son would feed five thousand in the wilderness, so now God feeds His prophet.

While Elijah lay under the tree, waiting to die, God did not grant his prayer. He did not follow through with what Elijah wanted. God had a better plan ... for Elijah and for the furtherance of His kingdom.

Instead, as the angel of the Lord, the Son of God came to him and brought bread and water to him.

God, Christ himself, personally gave Elijah the strength to go on. Forty days later, God sends the prophet to Mount Horeb and tells the prophet he is far from alone and his work is not in vain (19:15–18) as he is called to anoint a new king in Syria and Israel, as well as his own replacement, Elisha.

Jesus invites us, too, to cast our cares upon Him. After all, He took our sins upon Himself.

He bore all of them to the cross, where He died the death we deserved and paid all the debts we owed for them.

It was Jesus Himself that won for us the forgiveness of sins, our life, and our salvation.

And now, **As the Son of God fed Elijah, He now feeds us**, not with just bread and water, but with His own body and blood in the bread and wine of His holy Supper that we feasted on last week.

Here, the forgiveness and all the blessings of Jesus' cross are given to us personally. With the sin that separated us from God removed, we have the assurance He is always with us.

In this way, the Sacrament gives us strength so that we are refreshed. So, what are we to do when life on this earth wears us down, from one end to another?

Where are we to turn when there is nothing else for us to do...when we see no end in sight to our suffering?

The answer for our discouragement is the same answer that is always has been...Jesus Christ.]

He is the one who forever feeds us and reunites us with God. With His strength, we arise and go on.

And you see, being with Him means we are not alone, ever. Look around you. God has called your brothers and sisters to the same work.

Together we witness to Christ and His cross, love our neighbors, and allow God the Holy Spirit to call others to join us.

You are never alone. Your Savior is always at your side, just as He promised.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria