

SERMON FOR SUN. AUG. 8 AND WED. AUG. 11, 2021

Pent 11B 2022 1 Kings 19:4-8. John 6:41-51 “Bread for the Journey”

Dear fellow redeemed of, by and for Christ, Elijah was a great prophet of God. Through him, God spoke to His people urging them to repentance and faith.

When they didn't listen, Elijah announced God's judgement: it would not rain in Israel for three years. Yet throughout those three years, while there was famine and drought in the land, God provided food and drink for Elijah, a widow and her son making sure the widow's jars of flour and oil never ran out. And when the widow's son died, God raised him back to life through Elijah.

And then there was the great victory of God's power on Mt. Carmel, when Elijah defeated the 450 prophets of Baal in a contest to see whose god was the true God, once and for all.

Given all that he'd seen one would think Elijah would have a steadfast faith, but in our text, Elijah was so discouraged and afraid that he wanted to die.

When Queen Jezebel learned that her prophets and her god had lost to Elijah, she threatened his life – and fear and despair got the better of Elijah.

What good is miraculous food when you're going to die? Who would there be to raise *him* back to life? And so he journeys out into the wilderness, lies down under a broom tree, and tells God, in effect: **Take my life and let me be.**

But God does neither. He doesn't take his life or leave him alone – He feeds him. Not once, but twice.

And not with mere bread, but with a bread that supplied strength for Elijah's forty-day journey through the wilderness, until he arrives at the mountain of God.

Elijah couldn't do it alone. But thanks be to God; he was not alone. False gods, false prophets, and evil queens were no match for the One who accompanied Elijah.

God is the One who gives strength for the journey. The One who gives no mere bread, but the **bread of life.**

My friends, ***Elijah couldn't do it alone and neither can we.*** No matter how strong your Christian faith may be, it's easy for fear and despair to get the better of us.

It's easy to feel abandoned and alone. It's easy to want to lie down and tell God: *Take my life and let me be.*

Such words betray the fact that we believe we can make it through the wilderness alone, relying on our own strength.

But when we feel as if life is too much for us, it is *not* God's strength that has let us down, it's that we've (once again!) struck out on our own, through the wilderness, only to find out that the journey is too great for us. ***We can't do it alone.***

But all too often we try, don't we? We believe the voice of the world, which tells us that we should be able to.

Don't be weak, be strong! Why go to the doctor when you can diagnose what's ailing you on WebMD?

Why go to a lawyer when Legal Zoom can create the documents you need?

Who needs a realtor? Sell your house yourself.

For that matter, why do you need a pastor, the sacraments or a church? You can be spiritual in your own way.

Sadly, ***we may even think we have to be that way in order to please God.*** God helps those who help themselves, right? So we strike out on our own, thinking we'll do great things for God!

But Elijah couldn't do it alone and neither can we. In fact, when it comes to our spiritual life, ***we can't do it at all.***

We may *think* we can, and maybe for a while, it seems that we can. But what happens when your strength runs out; when you find out that the journey is too great for you?

When the only bread your spiritual pride can produce is filled with the maggots of sin and death?

No, *Elijah couldn't do it alone, and neither can we.*

We need the bread of life that only God can give.

The bread that is no mere bread, but the bread which will see us through this life, through the wilderness, to the mountain of God. We need ***the bread which gives life.***

While the journey through this life into the next is too great for us, ***it's not too great for God.***

Just as God came down from Heaven to help His needy prophet under a broom tree, so He has come down to us needy people to give us the bread of life that we need.

But to us He comes no longer as *the angel of the Lord*, now He has come in an even more incredible way, as God and man together in one person.

Jesus was incarnate as a man to **make the journey for all men; He was also divine, so he could live a sinless life in our place and then give His life for the life of the world.**

Jesus came to do what we could not do. To make the journey we could not make. To give us the life we need.

He comes to us who, like Elijah, are bereft of hope, for we are besieged by sin without, and overcome by sin within.

God knows better than to wait for us to get to Him, *for he knows the journey is too great for us!* So, He comes to us. With bread, with life, with hope. With Himself.

And so the Son of God comes down from Heaven, and becomes a man. He is given the name of Jesus, for he would be the One whom God would save us.

As His opponents pointed out, he **looked** like everyone else, but He was **not** like everyone else. He is the Son of God who came down from Heaven, to live with us under our broom trees.

He didn't come to sweep all our life-stealing sins under the rug so we could pretend they're not there!

That wouldn't do us any good, because they'd still be there. Eating away at us, causing division, creating fear and despair, robbing us of our life.

And so the Son of God came down from Heaven, *to lift the rug* under which we try to hide all our sins – not to shame us because of them, but to set us free from them!

To sweep all the guilt off of us, and place it on his sinless shoulders. He came that **we** may live, and that **He** may die.

Die for our sins. Die the death our sins so richly deserved. He came to give His life for the life of the world.

Best of all, *He then completed that journey* that is too great for us. For after taking all our sin and guilt, and dying our death, **He rose again back to life.** He is risen!

He died and rose that His life might be our life; that we too would rise from the dust of death.

He came to us so that when our journey through this life is complete, we might live forever with him on the mountain of God! **PAUSE**

Elijah's journey wasn't over yet, and neither is ours. God came to Elijah and gave Him life. He didn't take Him out of this life yet! Instead, God gave Him life, and food for the journey.

And so too you and me. The day is coming when our journey through this life will be complete, and dying and rising with Jesus, He will take us to the mountain of God.

Of that you can be sure. You have His promise. But He comes to give you life even **now**. To be your Savior **now**.

And He does so first, in **Holy Baptism**, coming to you and creating the faith which receives the promise of eternal life.

That just as the Son of God was born a son of man, we sons of men might be born again as sons of God. And so you are God's child, even **Now**.

And then in His **Holy Word**, He comes to you and gives you life. First as His Word of Law "lifts the rug" you tried to you're your sin under, and then with His Word of forgiveness which sweeps all that sin away. **Now**.

And then He comes to you and gives you **the bread of life** you need for your journey home.

The very same body given and blood once shed on the cross, are given to you even now at this altar.

To give you the *strength* and the faith that you need; to give you the *forgiveness* that you need, even now.

God feeds you not with mere earthly food, since our journey through this life is no mere earthly journey! Instead, He gives you His very self to enable you to survive the journey through this life, to the next.

Your Savior Jesus – the One who completed this journey for you, will take you through your life with Him so that you can live forever with His Father on the mountain of God.

Brothers and sisters, *Elijah couldn't do it alone, and neither can we*. But thanks be to God, you are not alone.

So if you've been feeling like Elijah was in our text, if you're going to curl up and hide under a tree, don't look for a broom tree!

Curl up and hide under the tree of the cross, where God gave His life for you. His life for your life.

"I am the bread of life," Jesus said. So come, dear saints; eat this bread, and live. Come, my fellow redeemed and as we stated earlier in today's Introit, **"Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed are all who take refuge in Him."** AMEN