

1 Kings 19:4-8

“Arise and Eat”

12<sup>th</sup> Sunday af. Pentecost

August 12, 2018

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, Our Heavenly Fathers  
And Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

**[Introduction]**

Elijah sat under the broom tree, sulking and feeling sorry for himself.

I am sure you can't relate.

I am sure you have never sulked or felt sorry for yourself.

And there...

Elijah sat under the broom tree, sulking and feeling sorry for himself.

You can sense the despair as Elijah complained ***“Enough, Lord! I've had enough!  
Take my life if you want it, but just let . . . me . . . be!”***

Elijah's problem was that he felt God had abandoned him.

Elijah certainly wasn't the only one of God's chosen prophets to complain about that.

- Moses protested that leading Israel was too much to do alone.
- Jonah felt God had left him twisting in the wind  
when God let Nineveh off the hook.
- Jeremiah complained bitterly about having no say in his career choice,  
since once God called him to be a prophet, there was no escape.

**[Elijah was curved in on himself (vv 4–5a)]**

From Elijah's perspective, things just weren't fair.

He'd been an eyewitness to God's faithfulness and power.

God cared for him during the three-year drought.

God demonstrated his power through him,

by defeating the prophets of Baal on the top of Mount Carmel.

God sent rain at Elijah's request.

But at the first angry words from Israel's pagan Queen Jezebel,

Elijah turns tail and runs away.

At least twice, Elijah will whine to God.

***“I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”***

(1 Ki 19:10; again in v 14).

Elijah's real problem was that he was so turned in on himself  
because of sin that he shut God out of his life and fell into deep despair.

Martin Luther described one of the effects of sin by using a Latin word *incurvatus*.

Sin separates us from God and turns our attention from him to ourselves.

When we look to ourselves,  
we discover our own weaknesses,  
our inability to provide for ourselves or protect ourselves,  
our inability to save ourselves, and we quickly fall into despair.

It's like we're curled up into a little ball,  
and we lose sight of all that God is and all that God does for us.

[*We are curved in on ourselves*]      And the reality is... I am Elijah!

Not that I've experienced the kind of miraculous power of Elijah  
– God performed 16 miracles through Elijah.  
Not that God has ever chosen me to be his instrument  
in a demonstration of his power against a fake god on Mount Carmel.

I am Elijah because  
I easily find myself forgetting all the wonderful things God has done for me.  
I easily find myself curving in on myself because of my sin.  
I easily find myself looking inside myself for hope, for power, for strength,  
for goodness, for value.

And I'm disappointed because I don't see what I'm looking for.  
I feel cut off from God, and when I'm cut off from God by my sin,  
I'm cut off from everyone else as well.

So I find myself a little broom tree of some kind and begin to whine, "Nobody likes me. Everybody hates me. God, why don't you just leave me alone? Why don't you just take my life and be done with it?"

Are you Elijah too?

I am Elijah! I sometimes feel as if I've worked so hard, given so much, and nobody notices, especially God!

My sin blinds me from seeing how God has been at work in me, and I end up wallowing in self-pity.

Are you Elijah too?

Sin, when allowed to run rampant, tightens us up into such a tight ball that we can even lose sight of the fact that God is!

So we head for the broom tree.

Some of us hide in whining and complaining.

Some hide in turning into a workaholic,

thinking we can pull ourselves out of despair by our own bootstraps.

Some try to find solace in a bottle or in illicit drugs or in sex.

Some search for deliverance in power trips.

But we are all doing our searching under the wrong "broom tree."

**[God turned Elijah outward]**

God's solution is to get our attention and to give us food and strength for the journey of our lives.

God said, "Arise and Eat."

God sent an angel to bring Elijah food and drink to sustain him for his journey.

God told the prophet that he was not alone,

that God has reserved for himself seven thousand Israelites

who had not worshiped Baal (1 Ki 19:18).

God had not abandoned Elijah.

He turned Elijah out from himself and back toward him.

**[God turns us outward]**

AND God will not leave us turned inward on ourselves.

He turns us out toward him.

He does that by proving just how focused he is on us.

God hasn't abandoned us at all.

He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to hang on the tree in our place.

God did not abandon us; he abandoned his own Son in our place.

This is made painfully obvious in Jesus' terrible cry from the cross,  
"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).

In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, sin's power over us was destroyed.

We're free; we're victorious; we're powerful.  
We're protected; we're safe; we have reason to live.

By letting us know this, God "uncurls" us from our sinful condition.  
He is present; he is our power; he loves us.  
Hearing this draws our eyes to him, away from ourselves.

Furthermore...

God has placed us, his chosen ones, into a community of believers so that we can  
build one another up in the faith.

He provides brothers and sisters in the faith to whom we can turn to hear of his  
love and comfort when we feel weak, discouraged, or despairing.

He opens our eyes to see him at work through these brothers and sisters.

God said, "Arise and Eat."

We are fed and nourished for our journey as well.

Christ is the very bread of life, the Word of God.

He gives us his own body and blood as food and drink,

given and shed for our forgiveness, offering us the gifts of life and salvation.

It is God.... God who turns us outward from ourselves toward Him.

**[Conclusion]**

God speaks to us: "Arise and eat, for the journey is too much for you."

And strengthened by the food that God provides,

we are prepared to continue our journey for God's glory. Amen.

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"Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good  
that you may do his will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.  
Amen." (Heb 13:20-21)

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