

12 S. after Pentecost 8/11/24
1 Kings 19:1-8 14B

“Get up and eat”: that was the buzzing alarm clock that awakened the Prophet Elijah as he slept under a broom tree. He had just come back from that magnificent victory at Mt. Carmel, where fire blazed down from heaven, and 450 prophets of Baal were put to the sword. What a heroic day for Yahweh, and for the prophet of the Lord!

So, there was Elijah, flush with victory, now expecting God to oust Wicked Queen Jezebel, the murderous wife of King Ahab. Finally, there would be an end to the worship of Baal! Finally, the people of Israel would return to the right worship of Yahweh!

But, that’s not what happened. Wicked Queen Jezebel’s message to the prophet was, *“So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of [one of the dead prophets of Baal] by this time tomorrow” (1 Ki 19:2)*. Jezebel meant business.

Suddenly, Elijah lost his focus and feared for his life. To Elijah, it looked as if God had lost interest. Where was the follow-through after defeating the prophets of Baal?

So, Elijah fled into the wilderness, depressed and disillusioned, and found a shaded place to sit under a broom tree. He prayed and asked God to let him die. “It’s enough. I can’t take it anymore.” Exhausted, he fell asleep.

But who hasn’t been there? We’ve all been under that broom tree -- feeling useless, washed up, and weary to the bone. We want to do what God has given us to do, but the Jezebels of this world impede and frustrate us. And the worst of it is that God seems powerless, distant, and disinterested. Like Elijah, we feel alone and isolated.

What an enormous let down for Elijah. In the past, God had always come through. There never was a time when God hadn't taken care of Elijah. God once used ravens to deliver bread and meat to Elijah in the wilderness. That lasted for an entire year! When Elijah went to stay with a widow and her son for more than three years, her flour and oil never ran out. There was never a shortage of bread, even amid a serious famine!

Yet, you could almost see this crisis brewing for Elijah. When he was at Mt. Carmel for the showdown between Yahweh and Baal, he shouted to the people, *"I, even I only am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men"* (1 Ki 18:22).

Even after God, again, feeds him, he comes to a cave and says it again – this time 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" (1 Ki 19:10).

Do you remember what they used to say on the "Little Rascals?" "They never learn". We never seem to learn, do we? What is the 1st Commandment? What does this mean? We should fear, love, and trust in that sacred trinity of me, myself, and I. My reason, my resources, my reserves.

No, My Friends, that's not how it goes. But, it's how to live and act sometimes, and like Elijah, that only leads us to despair under the broom tree. Elijah was there, because he was convinced everything depend on him. As the people of God, we can't live as if everything depends only on us – because it doesn't. If we think that way, fearing, loving, and trusting in ourselves, we'll wind up under a broom tree in the wilderness – confused, lost, weary, and broken.

The problem with Elijah wasn't Jezebel. God could handle Jezebel, and He would in His own time and way. The problem with Elijah was ... Elijah. The problem with us is ... us. We don't fear, love, and trust in God above all things. We don't trust God's timing and His ways. And we drive ourselves to despair because we think that God has abandoned us to our enemies, even to death and the grave.

But God is merciful. It comforts us to see how gentle and patient God is with Elijah. He doesn't reprimand him. He doesn't scold him, "Have you already forgotten the great miracle I did? How can you act this way?" He wouldn't let Elijah die in the wilderness. He just opens His hand and gives Elijah bread to eat. He gives him a chance to sleep and then gives him more food to eat, for *"for the journey is too great for you"* (v. 7).

You, Dear Child of God, are also on a journey, a journey through this valley of the shadow of death. It's hard. It's difficult. It's downright scary. And for that journey you also must eat what God has to give to you.

"The journey will be too great for you." God is saying that to each of us. It's too much for us to journey through this life, this wilderness, without God's food and drink. It's too much for us, to battle sin, death, and devil, unless we eat and drink from the table God prepares. It's too much for us to journey from baptism to the resurrection on a starvation diet.

But how often do we try to get through the day without God's Word? We try to get through the week without God's Word and Sacrament. Sometimes, we are so foolish to go for weeks at a time without so much as a morsel of the Bread of Life come down from heaven.

And then we wonder why we sit under our broom trees, exhausted and depressed. It isn't God's fault; it's our own. The food and drink have been here all along, waiting for us.

Jesus says, *“Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”* (Mt 11:28). Jesus offers true refreshment. He says, *“Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty”* (Jn 6:35). Jesus is living water. He is living bread, baked over the burning coals of God’s love. He is food and drink, a food and drink that will carry you through to eternal life.

Jesus is food to strengthen you for the journey. He is drink to refresh and strengthen you on your way to eternal life. He will fortify, nourish, and build you up, so you reach God’s holy mountain on the day you rise from the dead. That’s why He promises, *“The one who eats this bread will live forever”* (Jn 6:51).

Jesus can make that promise because He is the One who won salvation for us poor sinners. He was born of Virgin Mother, so that the sin of the world was put on His flesh. His body was broken and His blood shed those dark hours He hung on Calvary’s cross. Yes, the cross was Jesus’ broom tree in the wilderness, where abandoned by His Father, the sinless Son died for the life of the world. The Good News for you, Dear Child of God, was because Jesus was abandoned by His Father, God will never abandon you in your hour of trial under the broom tree.

And Christ’s Church is the dispenser of that food for your journey, where the people of God believe Jesus’ words: *“This is my body; this is my blood.”* The Church is the breadbasket for the world, dispensing living bread to dying sinners, bringing them life with the life of Jesus. That’s why you are here, once again, this morning. You come and eat living bread, the food for eternal life.

Jesus says to you today, *“Get up and eat. Believe in me. Feed on me. Without Me as your living bread, this journey will be too much for*

you. So, take this bread, which I give you, and eat it. This is my body given up for you. Take this cup, which I give you, and drink it. This is my blood shed for you.”

In the strength of this food, we journey from baptism through the wilderness to the mountain of God. We are led by Jesus, fed by Jesus, and fed with Jesus. It doesn't get any better than that.

So, get up and eat the Bread of Life. Get up and eat the living bread come down from heaven. Get up and eat, trusting Jesus, who gives His flesh for your life and for your food. And you will live forever. Amen.