

“Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 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.”

The showdown happened, about four hundred prophets of the false god Baal against the prophet of Yahweh, Elijah. Two altars were set up, one to Baal, and one to Yahweh, the true God. Baal did not answer the prophets’ call, but the Lord answered Elijah and sent fire from heaven to accept the burnt offering. Here’s the part you don’t hear about in Sunday school, Elijah slaughtered the false prophets at the brook Kidron. The rains came back after three years of drought showing that Yahweh, not Baal, is the Lord of the heavens.

Evil is defeated. The good guy wins. Roll credits, right? Not exactly. 1. (oops!) Why would the Lord let Jezebel take aim at Elijah? Why stop at the prophets of Baal, why not turn the sword on wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel? Eradicate evil once and for all?

If this was Hollywood, that’s exactly what would happen. Elijah would confront the evil monarchs and with a flash of divine fire, they would be blasted to smithereens. But this isn’t Hollywood, it’s real life. Upon hearing the threat, **“Then [Elijah] was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.”** 2. (ugh!) Why would the Lord let Elijah crumble like a house of cards?

It gets worse. We read in the next verse: **“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.”** From such heights the prophet Elijah sinks down to such depths.

It’s as though Elijah were to say, “Lord, what could I have done differently? I did what you commanded me. I stood before kings and prophets and called them to repentance! I destroyed the evil idolaters who were leading Your people astray. But the worship of my country is defiled with idols. Don’t You know this country will be destroyed because of this? Can’t You help? I’m no better than my forefathers who warned them to deaf ears!”

But I think we can relate. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh work overtime to bring us to despair. We take the family to church, but we fall down a few pegs when we lash out in anger at our children on the drive home. We witness our Christian faith to our friend at the bar, but the same night we have too many drinks and need to call a cab home.

We finally have the courage to ask our neighbor not to talk so profanely when he comes over to shoot the breeze, but then we say a few curse words when the hammer hits our thumb instead of the nail.

When the crisis hits, we tell all our friends how helpful our faith in God is, but if only they knew about those dark nights of the soul when the lights go out, and sometimes we start to doubt whether God really loves us. We start to wonder if we did something wrong to deserve this. We get anxious, even when the Lord promises that He's got us covered.

The devil bares his fangs and threatens punishment when we seek to follow the Lord. The world winks at us and tells us, "Everybody's doing it, so why not join the crowd?" Our sinful flesh fails us, and before you know it, we're walking in the way of the world even when our heart knows better.

We may still wonder why the Lord let Elijah crumble like a house of cards to Jezebel's threat, but it's no mystery that we often crumble at the first sign of trouble. We are no better than our fathers, and we can often be driven to doubt and despair just like Elijah.

And so it is that in these spiritual highs we often lose sight of the One who gave us the strength to do it in the first place. The Lord doesn't abandon Elijah. Our text continues, "**And [Elijah] lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, 'Arise and eat.' 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. 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.'**" 3. (aha!) The Messenger of the Lord feeds him for a journey too great for Him.

The journey is too great for you, and that's the point. At every step of the way, the Lord was with Elijah to accomplish the mission of warning the enemies of the Lord and calling people to follow Him. It wasn't Elijah who sent fire down from heaven. It wasn't Elijah who multiplied the flour and oil to give food to the Widow of Zarephath, it was God. It wasn't Elijah who sent rain after the drought, it was God.

So too, our Heavenly Father is pleased to send the Living Bread of Heaven who fasted in the desert 40 days and 40 nights to be tempted by Satan when you would have given up by day two. The Father sent His Word incarnate to feed the 5,000 with just five loaves and two fish. The Father sent His Son who died and rose for you, and the bread that He gives for the life of the world is His flesh. **THE SON OF GOD FEEDS HIS PEOPLE TO OVERCOME THE DEVIL, THE WORLD, AND OUR SINFUL FLESH.**

4. (whee!) The Messenger of the Lord touches Elijah and feeds him. Let me re-read verse 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.'**" Many commentators believe that in this instance, the angel of the Lord is none other than the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity before He was born of

the Virgin Mary and became man. The Son of God touched Elijah to feed him, to encourage him, and to strengthen him.

Elijah would talk to God on Mount Horeb, and the Lord reassured Elijah letting him know he is not alone, that seven thousand remain faithful to the Lord in Israel. Elijah will anoint a new Syrian king, a new Israelite king, and a new prophet, Elisha. Those kings and that prophet would continue to fight the good fight and defend the name of the Lord. Despite the discouragement and frustration, the Lord had a plan for Elijah.

The Son of God touches and feeds us through a meal, also. In the Lord's Supper, the true body of Jesus touches our tongues, and the true blood of Jesus kisses our lips to reassure us, to forgive us, and to breathe life into us. This is no metaphor or mere symbol. In this meal, He who was sacrificed on Calvary touches us—even if we cannot understand how that's possible.

Because of the miracle that takes place every time at the Lord's Supper, it's special whether we realize it or not. Communion is not a medal of honor awarded to heroic Christians to show you how great you are. It is a lifeline our Lord throws to us who are drowning in despair, who feel like imposters and hypocrites. It's Jesus' way of tapping us on the shoulder to tell us, "Those promises you thought were only for the holy person in the pew next to you, those promises are for you, and yes, I mean you."

It is this meal that strengthens us for the faith journey that we know is too great for us. It is this meal, along with the words of life that we hear in the Bible, and the washing of regeneration of baptism, that give us the strength for the journey ahead.

5. (yeah!) The touch and the meal empowers Elijah for the journey. This bread and water that the angel of the Lord prepared for Elijah must have been a superfood. He travels forty days in desert terrain to the mountain of God.

The Word and Sacrament ministry we receive here week in, week out, strengthens us for the journey ahead. It ultimately prepares us for our arrival in Heaven when we die to be with Jesus. However, in the between, we are strengthened to show forth the love of Christ as we go out into our homes, our neighborhoods, and our workplaces.

Through it, the Lord reminds us that things aren't as bad as they seem. We have ample forgiveness when we fail to live up to His standards, and we are reminded of the multitude of Good all around us as the Lord continues to provide us all our needs of body and soul. The journey is too great for you, but it's never too great for the one who walked the road in our place and walks with us all the way. Amen.