

Get Up and Eat – This Journey is Too Much for You!

Grace and Peace are yours, dear friends in Christ, especially you Vicar Brohn.

Are you ready for this? I mean, you really should be, right? You've had 10 great years of training in our synod schools: 4 years at Luther Prep, 4 years at Martin Luther College learning the Biblical languages, 2 years at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary studying Scriptures in depth, memorizing portions of it. – Quick Quiz, where in the Bible, chapter and verse is the passage, "God helps those who help themselves"? [just kidding – it's neither in the Bible nor very helpful.] Good, you passed that quiz. With all these years of training, on top of being a PK – Pastor's Kid – one might think that you're ready for this year.

Before we come to a final answer, let's consider God's chosen prophet Elijah. All we know about his beginnings is that he was a "Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead" located East of the Jordan River. (1 Kings 17) His name means, "The Lord is my God." Was he prepared for what the Lord had in store for him?

Right from the start the Lord conveyed powerful and often condemning messages to the Israelites and their rulers. For three years, the Lord withheld rain, but miraculously provided food for him through ravens. Later a widow provided daily bread for him, herself, and her son... from a jar of oil and flour that never ran out. Even when her son died, God raised him through Elijah. Perhaps the greatest line on Elijah's resume was the battle on Mt. Carmel against the 450 prophets of Baal who couldn't conjure their false god to bring fire upon the altar; and then the true God brought down fire from heaven and those prophets were put to death. You would think that Elijah was know fully ready to take on any and every challenge and lead God's people back to worshiping the true God! Sadly, the opposite is what happened. With one threat to his life from Queen Jezebel, he tucked tail and ran away... which is where we pick up our Sermon Text from 1 Kings 19.

³ *Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors."* ⁵ *Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.*

No one knows better than the Lord if you or I or any of us is ready for the challenges that lie ahead of us... whether you're starting your vicar year, about to become parents, raising teenagers or becoming empty nesters... and that's a good thing that he knows... because he alone knows how to perfectly prepare no matter the task, for indeed without the Lord – it is too much. Today the Holy Spirit wills that we see this, that we face the facts – about sin, that we see the reality of God's constant help, and that we feast on the banquet God has already set before us – a banquet that thoroughly equips us for the road ahead.

I. Face the facts – of sin (vv. 4, 5)

Elijah ran nearly 100 miles from his home. Jezebel's threat on his life was seemingly the straw that broke the camel's back. He felt he was "no better than his ancestors." Whether that was because he wasn't able to change everyone's heart or because he was keenly aware of his own sin – we don't know, but his statement is well put. None of us is any better than our ancestors. We all have fallen short of the glory of God. The Apostle Paul echoed this same truth when he confessed, "*I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle*" (1 Co 15:9). You and I deserve nothing good from the Lord. Even if we could run away from God – where would we go; is there any broom tree that could hide us from the all-seeing eye of the Lord?

II. See the reality – of God’s constant help (v. 6)

The reality of our sin, however, is no reason to run away from God. No, it is precisely when we realize our failures and complete inadequacies that we understand God’s place in our lives – that we are 100% dependent upon him. As a vicar, a pastor, a father, a mother, a teenager, a student, a grandpa, a business owner, a house wife... all are 100% dependent upon God. For the strength to accomplish our tasks... for the zeal to use our God-given talents for his glory... above all for the comfort and peace that only the message of the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus – we are blessedly dependent upon the Lord.

And while it certainly looks like Elijah had given up all hope – how amazingly comforting to know that God had not given up on him! God sent his personal messenger, an angel who touched him, woke him up, both physically and spiritually we might say. God knew Elijah was in need and so he met complete every one of his needs... for food and nourishment – a cake of fresh baked bread over hot coals... water to quench his parched throat. This first meal no doubt satisfied his physical needs and Elijah slept; but the Lord wasn’t done. Grace upon grace, God sends the angel again with these words, ***“Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”***

Indeed, this journey of life is too much for us... but the reality of our lives is this: God’s help IS constant in our lives. God is ever faithful to his promises of daily bread. He is always true to his promise that he is with us and will never leave us. He will strengthen and uplift us time and again, even when we feel like we’re a complete failure... when the tasks aren’t getting done, when the homework is piling up, when the children are... children... when perhaps even in our best sharing of the Gospel, in what we think is the best sermon I’ve ever written... nothing seems to change, and the idol worship of money and self still remain even in our own heart.

It’s then that God surrounds us with his constant love and help. Like to Elijah, God sends his angels to minister to us as well. In Psalm 91:11 we read this incredible promise, ***“For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways!”*** In the same way God sends his human messengers too – our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who feed our hungry souls with the Bread of Life, the very word of God.

III. Feast on God’s Word – for the strength and direction you need (vv. 7, 8)

So get up, get up and feast upon God’s Word, feast on Jesus for he is the Bread of Life, that which sustains and strengthens like no other. Look how true this was for Elijah. ⁷ ***The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”*** ⁸ ***So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.*** With a only his belly full of two meals of bread, God miraculously strengthened and guided him through 200 miles of the most inhospitable, scorching, desolate deserts to Mt Horeb, also known as Mt. Sinai where God gave Moses the 10 Commandments. Once again, Elijah learned what it is to be 100% dependent upon the Lord – to feast there upon the Bread of Life, the words of the Lord. Continue reading in 1 Kings 19 and you’ll see exactly how God did that – through his still small voice.

It’s no different for you and for me. The tasks and the journey ahead of us are too much – but how much greater is our God! How much greater is the feast he has prepared for us in His Word and in His Sacrament! With these supernatural foods, God completely calms our fears and fully feeds our souls, equipping us for each day.

So, are you ready for this? God knows... he knows you are, because your faith and your hope and your trust is in him. And that means we will continue to feast in the banquet he sets before us, so that doubt and despair, threats and failures won’t distract our full attention to the awesome task God has called us to: being his witnesses, bringing Jesus, the Bread of Life, to starving dying world. Amen.