

November 8, 2009

Text: 1 Kings 19:9-18

8:30am, 11am & CSW 9:16am

**Title: Food for the Journey**

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***The Text: 1 Kings 19***

*<sup>1</sup> Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."*

*<sup>3</sup> Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup> 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." <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." <sup>6</sup> He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.*

*<sup>7</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

*<sup>10</sup> He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."*

*<sup>11</sup> The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire.*

*And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup> He replied, "I have been very*

*zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."*

*<sup>15</sup> The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. <sup>16</sup> Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. <sup>17</sup> Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. <sup>18</sup> Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."*

### *Introduction*

**I want to introduce you to one of the greatest prophets who ever lived.** His name was Elijah. He lived about 3,000 years ago. He was a Tishbite from Gilead. Gilead is a country in the Middle East right across the Jordan River from the northern part of Israel. Elijah was a traveling kind of guy. He liked time to himself and to enjoy the open country. He was known, however, to speak his mind when the situation demanded it.

### *Background*

**In his early days, Elijah kept pretty much to himself.** He lived off the land and visited places of interest. In his travels, though, he became alarmed. The local governments were becoming more and more corrupt. His home nation of Israel had been on decline even since the time of King Solomon. Solomon was truly a wise and gifted King, but his family worshipped other gods and eventually split the nation into two parts. After 930BC, two tribes from Judah to the south and ten tribes from Israel to the north.

**When Elijah came on the scene,** there had been six kings in Israel and they all were bad. They had set up a whole counterfeit system of religion so people would not go to Jerusalem to worship. The God of Israel got replaced by the false gods of two golden calves (called Baal), new priests, and new religious festivals to boot. Each new king continued this path of increasing idolatry, violence, greed, and hunger for power. Ahab, the son of Omri, was the seventh King of Israel and one of the most evil. The Lord God was not pleased. This is where Elijah entered in.

### *Elijah Becomes a Prophet of God*

**I cannot give you much detail on how it all transpired** but Elijah became one of the first prophets of God. In his worship of God, he must have felt God speak to him. In his traveling around, he must have talked to God about what he saw. God must have spoken to him as well. It must have been so clear that he felt he had to speak God's words to others. So Elijah did.

**You and I are called to be prophets as well.** We are to speak out on the behalf of those who have no voice, no advocates. As children of God, we are to have the eyes and heart of God to address injustices in the world. There are many issues that need our attention: safe and affordable housing in Lancaster, adequate health care for all Americans, and nutritious food for all people on this planet are tough but important issues. God's people need to be taking the lead on how we work together on these things in this generation.

**The time Elijah spoke out that got him into trouble** is when he traveled to the capital, Samaria, met King Ahab face to face. He confronted Ahab and said, "*As surely as God lives, the God of Israel before whom I stand in obedient service, the next years are going to see a total drought—not a drop of dew or rain unless I say otherwise.*" (1 Kings 17:1). This was a shock to Ahab. Baal was the god who was supposed to bring rain and lots of good harvest. The Lord God was going to make it all stop for years?

### *Elijah on the Run*

**King Ahab did not like being confronted.** God instructed Elijah to get out of town and hide out at the Kerith Ravine on the other side of the Jordan River about 20 miles away. It was a great hiding place, but not much food. This is the wild part. God sent ravens—birds to feed Elijah. They brought bread in the morning and meat in the evening. Like clockwork these birds took care of him. **How has God taken care of you and me?** Sometimes it is in dramatic ways like birds. Most of the time, it is in little miracles God does everyday. Most gathered here today are well fed. We have warm, safe housing with clean water. We have transportation and access to good medical care. These are all important things. When we give thanks daily for these and other blessings in our lives, we realize that we are not alone, that God is taking care of us.

**Since God stopped all the rain,** eventually the brook Elijah was hiding near dried up. From there God told him to go up north to the town of Zarephath in the pagan

land of Phoenicia. There God told a widow to take care of Elijah. A foreign widow was going to take care of a Hebrew man. First, it is birds and now it is a widow. You never know exactly how God is going to meet a need.

### *Care from a Foreign Widow*

**When Elijah got to the town gate he saw this widow** gathering sticks and he asked her for a drink and some bread. He must have hit a raw nerve for she replied: *“As surely as the Lord your God lives, I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die” (1Kings 17:12).* A foreign widow with **no food** is going to feed Elijah?

**No, God was going to feed Elijah.** He said to her, *“Don't worry about a thing. Go ahead and do what you've said. But first make a small biscuit for me and bring it back here. Then go ahead and make a meal from what's left for you and your son. This is the word of the GOD of Israel: 'The jar of flour will not run out and the bottle of oil will not become empty before GOD sends rain on the land and ends this drought.'”* **Do you know what this woman did?** She ran home and did exactly what he had asked. And she did not run out of food. Each day there was enough for Elijah and her family. When you and I run out of food, money, energy, hope, patience, peace...that does not mean God has. We learn to trust God everyday, for all things. **That is what God’s people do. We keep trusting God, giving generously, and serve others daily.**

### *Confrontation on Mt. Carmel*

**Finally, after three years, God comes to Elijah** and tells him to go to Ahab. There was going to be a showdown in front of all the people on Mount Carmel. It was 850 of Ahab’s prophets against one prophet of God, Elijah. They were going to find out whose God had the power to send rain. *God wanted to win back the hearts and love of his people.* The contest was this: each group would sacrifice a bull on an altar, but not light the fire. Their god would have to light it. It was a great scene. All the people gathered around. Elijah called the question, *“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.*

**That is a question for each of us today as well.** What God are you and I following? Is it god of money, fear, selfishness, or convenience? Or are you and I

going to follow the Lord God, the God fully revealed in Jesus Christ? We need to chose and give our lives to one. We cannot have it both ways. Jesus wants all of us...heart, mind, body, and spirit. Is there a lesser god that has distracted you and me? **It is time to get back on track.**

**All morning the prophets of Baal and Asherah** prayed and begged their gods to light their sacrifice in vain. No action. No response. Then after noon, Elijah invited the people to come rebuild the altar of the Lord, using 12 large stones to represent the 12 tribes of Israel. Then he ordered the altar to be drenched in water three times so the trench around it is full of water. Only God was going to be able to light this fire.

**Elijah prayed,** *"O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."* Within an instant the fire of God came and devoured the sacrifice and everything near it. All the people fell to their faces and declared: *"The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!"* The false prophets were seized and the rain came. Ahab robe back to his evil wife Jezebel while Elijah ran along ahead. It was an exhausting day for Elijah!

*On the Run Again*

**When Jezebel found out that her priests had been killed,** she threatened Elijah. *"May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."* He ran. He ran south into Judah and then further south into the desert. He stopped, prayed he could die, and then slept under a tree. An angel came twice to feed him and then he traveled to the place where God had met with Moses, Mount Horeb or Sinai. God met Elijah there.

**When Elijah got there God asked him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"** Elijah thought he was the only one who cared about the things of God. He thought he was the only one in danger. God called him to the mouth of the cave to behold his presence. After wind, an earthquake, and fire raged before him, God appeared before him in a gentle whisper. He asked again, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" I think Elijah thought the answer was obvious so he repeated himself. He had a surprise coming. God told him he had 7,000 people who were still loyal to him. He also said that Elijah should go back the way he came and anoint a new king for

Aram, a new king for Israel, and a new prophet to replace himself. Elijah's work was not done yet. God had other plans.

### *Application*

**What are you doing here?** Is not that the question God is asking you and me today? What are you doing here? Why does God have you and me on this planet? If we are still here, our work is not done yet.

- We are here to worship.
- We are here to be healed.
- We are here to be equipped to help others.
- We are here to get direction on how to live our lives in ways that honor God and bless the world.
- We are here to stand in obedient service to the Lord.

What is the still quiet voice saying to you and me today? Like Elijah, let us listen and obey.