

St. Matthew's Lutheran Church & School, Oconomowoc, WI
12th Sunday after Pentecost – Year B
1 Kings 19:3-18
August 15, 2021

Sermon: 1 Kings 19:3-18
“Have You Had Enough?”

Here we are and summer is ending as we begin school on Wednesday, much to the excitement of some and the terror of other children. Summertime means sun and sunburn, swimming, and push pops. It's also a time of summer vacations for so many. One of the memorable summer vacations we took as a family happened several years ago. We went to a place that isn't far from here called the Wisconsin Dells. We packed in a lot of activities on that vacation. We went to a place called Wizard Quest where the kids search through a magical setting looking for clues and searched to solve puzzles and find the wizards. We went on Duck boat rides. We stuffed our faces at a restaurant that serves your burger and fries, not by waiter or waitress—oh no that's not special enough for the Dells—but by a train that looped around the restaurant. We saw the stunt spectacular Tommy Bartlett ski show. We went to Noah's Ark and got our fill of as many water slides as our legs could climb. We went to a candy store and the kids got to pick out some candy they wanted. We slipped and slid and raced around the go-kart track. It was a lot of fun and the kids got to do so many activities they don't normally get to do. It was amazing and for a long time that vacation was talked about. You would think with that much fun and that many great activities to do we would not hear one syllable of complaint from our children the entire time on vacation and for a long time after. You would think with that much fun the only words we would hear from their mouths was, “Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.” Do you think those were the only words we heard from our children that week? Do you think we never heard a word of complaint from them about what we were doing or what we had planned? If you've spent ten minutes around kids in your life you already know the answer, but I'll give you two guesses to answer that question, but you will only need one. Wouldn't you think they had enough? They had enough fun, enough food, enough candy, enough good times. It took about as long as it takes for the weather to change in Wisconsin before we started hearing, “I don't want to go down that waterslide again. I don't want pizza again. I don't want that candy I want this one.” In a place that is completely designed for fun and excitement they still found a way to complain. It's interesting that no matter what happens and no matter what we get, it's never quite enough. Tomorrow I'll find something to complain about. Oh, the weekend was amazing weather, I just wish it didn't have to rain today because now I can't have three perfect days of plans outside.

There was a person that saw some amazing things happen in his life. God worked in amazing ways. That person was Elijah. Early on in his ministry God told him that a famine was going to scorch the land and it did. A drop of rain didn't fall to the parched ground. Then God told Elijah to go out into the desert...in the middle of the worst famine you've ever seen. But don't worry about it Elijah because I'm going to send some birds to feed you. So, Elijah went out there and sure enough here come the ravens bringing him a loaf of Brownberry bread and some pot roast every morning and evening. Then God sends him to a poor widow that only has enough left to make one last meal for herself and her son. Elijah has the audacity to say, “Wait, make me a meal first,” and the handful of flour and few last drops of oil never ran out. Then the widow's son dies, and God answers Elijah's prayer and brings him back to life. And then came the unbelievable showdown between Elijah and the prophets of the false god Baal. Unfortunately, Baal worship was prevalent for the Israelites at that time and finally it was enough, all right, there's going to be a showdown between the prophets of Baal and Elijah, the prophet of the one and only true God. God show in no uncertain terms he is the only God as fire comes down from heaven and consumes the sacrifice proving once and for all that he is the one, the only, true God. But, King Ahab, the king of the southern kingdom, had no use for God and even lesser use for Elijah and he tells his queen, Queen Jezebel, what happened, and she makes it her personal mission to kill Elijah.

How does Elijah react? Remember what Elijah has seen God do and how he has seen God work throughout his ministry with those amazing acts. Does he react trusting in the God that fed him in the desert with birds? Does he trust in the God that is so powerful he can even bring back the dead to life like the widow's son? Does he react knowing the victory is already God's because God already showed his victory in the showdown with the prophets of Baal? How does Elijah react to this threat from Queen Jezebel?

Well, we need to go looking for Elijah. He's not where we would expect to find him. He's way down at the very bottom of the land in Beersheba. What's he doing down there? Is he going on a little road trip? Enjoy a little scenery? He's running from his problems. Elijah takes matters into his own hands and what is his solution? What's the best answer he could come up with? What is going to solve all of Elijah's problems? He went out into the desert, plops down under a tree, and prays, “*I have had enough, Lord,*” he said. *Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.*” (1 Kings

19:4). This is the great prophet from the Lord. He saw miracle after miracle in spectacular ways and he says, “I just want to give up. I’ve had enough.”

Have you had enough? Maybe you haven’t reached the breaking point like Elijah but maybe you are pretty close? Have you had enough? Are you tired? Are you worn out? I have a hunch that you don’t have a king and queen hunting you down like it’s opening day of deer season, but you feel what Elijah is going through. You feel like crawling out into the desert and joining Elijah because you’ve had enough. Maybe it’s financial pressure or pressure at work or pressure at home and it’s building and building and building. Ever feel like you can’t do enough? Ever feel like no matter what you do, no matter what you try, it’s never enough. Maybe your prayer is for God to take it away. That would have been easy for Elijah, wouldn’t it? Can’t God just take away our problems? Can’t he just take away everything that overwhelms us? Can’t he deal with it so that we don’t have to?

Let me ask you this: what was Elijah’s real problem? Here’s a hint: it wasn’t the king and queen trying to hunt him down. Elijah faced lots of problems before. This wasn’t new. This wasn’t even the first run in he had with the king and queen. Why did he feel like he had enough? What was Elijah’s real problem that made him just want to give up? Elijah stopped focusing on God and started focusing on himself. When he did that what was the great solution that he came up with? Go out into the desert and give up. Isn’t that often our problem just like Elijah? A problem only becomes a real problem when you don’t have a solution. When we focus on ourselves instead of God then we don’t have a solution.

God gives Elijah the solution just like he did when the raven came and fed him in the desert, just like he did when the flour and oil didn’t run out, just like he did in raising the widow’s son from the dead, just like he did at the showdown with the prophets of Baal, and he does once again, “*All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” 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. Then 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.” 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” (1 Kings 19:5-9).* The solution wasn’t in himself. The solution wasn’t to focus on himself. The solution is only found where it’s always found, in our gracious God. Notice that God didn’t take away the threat from the king and queen, but he comes to Elijah and sustains him through it. But God wasn’t done with his solution.

He had more to teach Elijah that he would sustain Elijah with far more than just great miracles. God does even more miracles and shows his power with the wind, earthquake, and fire, but God wasn’t in any of those. It was the whisper. Elijah has had enough and feels like he is the only one left and God strengthens him not with a great display of power and authority, but with a whisper, with a gentle whisper he reminds Elijah he’s not alone. Listen how God tells Elijah specifically that he’s not alone. “*Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. 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. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him” (1 Kings 19:15-18).* What did God do there for Elijah? He told Elijah that he wasn’t alone and he specifically names people to tell Elijah he’s not alone and he promises Elijah, specifically, how God’s work would continue even when it looks like you’ve had enough.

Have you had enough? Listen to the gentle whisper of your loving God. Listen to the one who loves you. Listen to the one that promises us that we are not alone. Listen to the one that tells us specifically what his plan is for us. Jesus, born in Bethlehem, of a virgin, is the bread of life because in him is life. Life that he gave for you on the cross. Life that he gives because he rose from the grave. Have you had enough? Maybe because our true problem is the same as Elijah’s; we become too focused on ourselves and lose focus on our Savior. Listen to the voice of your Savior. He demands nothing from you, but simply give you everything. Listen to the gentle whisper of his forgiveness. You can never have enough of that. Amen.