

IT IS ENOUGH
Rev. Jason Santalucia

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Text: 1 Kings 19:4-8

An angel brings food and drink to Elijah in the wilderness.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." He got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

Elijah is on the run from his enemies, the corrupt king Ahab and his famously treacherous wife, Jezebel. They want to kill him because he proved that their god is no match for Israel's God. Afraid for his life and worn out from the strain of being a prophet, Elijah goes a day's journey into the wilderness, collapses under a tree, and basically gives up. "It is enough," he prays and asks God to take his life. He has reached his breaking point. He can't go any further. He's at the end of his rope—physically, emotionally, spiritually.

When we read this story, I think all of us have at least some idea of how Elijah feels because at some point we've felt that way, too. Our circumstances may have been different, and we may not have been ready to curl up and die, but I think we've all at one time or another said to ourselves, "That's it. I'm done. I can't take it anymore. It is enough."

Maybe you had a child who was going through a rough stage in life, or a parent with dementia, or a spouse whose health was declining, and the responsibility of

caring for them, and the constant worry, and the sheer exhaustion was overwhelming. I bet there were moments when you prayed, "It is enough."

Maybe there was a time when you lost your job, and the stress of being out of work, and the fear of losing everything you had, was a constant weight on your shoulders. I bet there were moments when you prayed, "It is enough."

Or maybe there was a time when you looked at the nation or the world, and you couldn't stand to see one more mass shooting, one more COVID outbreak, one more record-breaking heatwave, one more political scandal, one more bombed out hospital, one more starving child. I bet there were moments when we've all prayed, "It is enough."

Well, whenever we have one of those moments, there's something important to notice about Elijah's experience.

He's out there in the wilderness, all alone and feeling hopeless, when an angel appears and says, "Get up and eat." Elijah opens his eyes and looks around, and right next to him there's a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of

water. So, he gets up and eats, but it doesn't quite do the trick. He still doesn't have his strength back. He still doesn't have the will to go on. So, the angel appears again and says, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." And this time something happens. Something changes in Elijah. Something inside him comes back to life. He gets up, he has some more cake, he drinks some more water, and with that little bit of nourishment, he goes for forty days and forty nights and makes it all the way to Mount Horeb, where God is waiting for him.

Now, what's important to notice about this encounter is—well, actually a couple of things.

First of all, notice that Elijah can't just snap out of it; he can't just power through. He's in a very dark place, and he needs help to get out. And even then, it takes a lot of effort. The angel has to visit him twice because after the first visit, the darkness pulls him back in. I think that says something about the persistence of depression and how debilitating it is when we reach a point of despair. It's like a dream where you're trying to run away from something, but your legs feel like they're made of lead. I think it also shows what it takes to finally move forward. We can't do it alone. We need other people to support us. We need other people to be compassionate and encouraging and patient.

Second of all, notice what the angel does and does not do. The angel gives Elijah what he needs in that moment to get back on his feet and finish the rest of his journey. The angel does not wave a magic wand and take away all of his problems. Ahab and Jezebel are still out there; Elijah's life is still very much in danger; and he still has many miles of wilderness to get through. His situation really hasn't changed. His life is still kind of a mess.

What has changed is him. He's been restored. He's been returned to who he is. The old Elijah is back—the one who was full of confidence; the one who stood up to tyrants; the one Ahab called a "troubler of Israel" because he was such a pain in the neck. He's back, and he's able, now, to get on with his life.

I think that's a wonderful story, and a wonderful message. When we reach our breaking point, and we cry out, "It is enough," that's exactly what God gives us—enough. Enough to get out of whatever darkness we're in. Enough to overcome the inertia of fear and sorrow and weariness. Enough to take one step, and then another, and then another, until we get where we need to be.

As a parent caring for a kid with bipolar disorder, that really resonates with me.

Some days it's a struggle. Some days Mimi curls up in a ball and won't even speak. Some days I wonder if she's ever going to be able to take care of herself and be independent. And some days, if I'm being honest, I wonder if I'm ever going to get my life back or if I'm always going to have to be putting someone else's needs first.

But somehow I always manage to get past those low points, and I always manage to get free of those negative thoughts. But not through my own efforts. I wish I was that strong, but I'm not. It's always someone else who happens to be there just at the right moment to give me a pep talk when I get discouraged; or a little perspective when I lose sight of Mimi's overall progress; or a kick in the butt when I'm feeling sorry for myself.

And mostly it's my wife who does all that for me—especially the butt-kicking part. But she's not the only one. Sometimes it's my older daughter. Sometimes it's Mimi's therapist. Sometimes it's my therapist. Sometimes it's a friend at home. Sometimes it's one of you.

So what I would tell you this morning is keep all this in mind, and remember Elijah out there in the wilderness, the next time you're at a point where you just can't take it anymore. God sent him help when he really needed it, and God will do the same for you.

And don't be afraid to look for that help. Sometimes you have to be a little proactive. Earlier this summer, I found a support group for people who have a family member with a mental illness, and I went to one of their meetings, and it was incredibly helpful to sit and listen to other people's stories and hear them talk about what they're going through. It wasn't quite like having an angel bake me a cake, and it didn't fix anything. But it made me feel like I'm not alone, and that was exactly what I needed at that moment. It was enough to get me through. Amen.