

## Dine and Dash

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, how he had killed all Baal's prophets with the sword.  
<sup>2</sup> Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah with this message: "May the gods do whatever they want to me if by this time tomorrow I haven't made your life like the life of one of them."

<sup>3</sup> Elijah was terrified. He got up and ran for his life. He arrived at Beer-sheba in Judah and left his assistant there. <sup>4</sup> He himself went farther on into the desert a day's journey. He finally sat down under a solitary broom bush. He longed for his own death: "It's more than enough, LORD! Take my life because I'm no better than my ancestors." <sup>5</sup> He lay down and slept under the solitary broom bush.

Then suddenly a messenger tapped him and said to him, "Get up! Eat something!" <sup>6</sup> Elijah opened his eyes and saw flatbread baked on glowing coals and a jar of water right by his head. He ate and drank, and then went back to sleep. <sup>7</sup> The LORD's messenger returned a second time and tapped him. "Get up!" the messenger said. "Eat something, because you have a difficult road ahead of you."  
<sup>8</sup> Elijah got up, ate and drank, and went refreshed by that food for forty days and nights until he arrived at Horeb, God's mountain. <sup>9</sup> There he went into a cave and spent the night.

The LORD's word came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19:1-9

At supper on Wednesday night, I asked the table to recall a time when they felt like they had had enough. I mean *Enough* with a capital E, like bottom of the barrel, scraping the bottom, out of gas, running on fumes, end of the line, end of the rope, at wits end. Enough! It took just a second and folks started laughing. I didn't anticipate laughter, so I asked Janet and Gladys Alexander why they were laughing. "We just watched Aden and Dori for a few hours! We played and cooked together, and we could use some time alone!" The whole table chuckled in sympathy.

Johnnie told a story about driving his grandkids through Los Angeles. They were in the back seat carrying on; Johnnie looked up in the rearview mirror and instead of flowing traffic on the LA expressway he saw a little boy's bare white bottom squeezed up between the back seat and the windshield.

As a youth minister, I was driving a van full of teenagers to an adventure camp down on the coast. I looked in my rearview mirror just in time to witness three teenage girls press a handwritten sign containing their phone numbers up to the window as a car full of handsome air force enlistees drove by in the fast lane. We were less than three hours into a three day weekend.

Kids can wear us out. They require a full investment of time, energy, patience, and love. And it's not just their innocent antics that are exhausting. When our children are in trouble, they wring our emotions dry and leave our hearts starved for peace. There were stories of heart-ache at the table; stories about sick children, children who made some bad decisions, wayward and lost children. The stories were more than enough.

When Elijah cries out in our text today, “It’s more than enough, Lord!” we might guess that it was children that drove him there. The widow in Zarepath, from two weeks ago, she had a son. Elijah had spent many days with them. Before Elijah left, in fact, the young man fell sick, then bed-ridden, and finally he died. Elijah chastised God through tears, “Lord, why would you bring such evil against the widow I am staying with?” Then Elijah stretched his body over the boy three times begging God to give the boy his life back. And the boy lived. Surely that experience would be enough to drive Elijah into the wilderness?

But Elijah persevered and returned to Israel to confront King Ahab and the 450 prophets of Baal. The prophets weren’t children, but their behavior was childish. Elijah challenged them to a prayer competition and watched. The prophets of Baal cried and whined all morning, “Pay attention to us, pay attention.” They limped around raving and wailing at the top of their lungs. They hurt themselves until they were covered in mud and blood. When Elijah brought some order to the chaos, do you think he was appreciated? Do you think the prophets respected his hard work or thanked him for showing them a better way to pray? No, of course not.

Surely such childishness was enough to exasperate Elijah and drive him into the desert for some alone time? But again Elijah persevered in his vocation, the work he was called by God to do, to revitalize the religious life of God’s people and to purge the political arena of Baals influence. It was politics that cracked Elijah. With children, they may make us weary but we always seem to find more energy. Savon told me just last week, “It’s the hardest thing you’ll ever do, but it’s definitely the most rewarding thing too. You can be absolutely drained and still find a way to take care of them.” It’s not usually the children that make us want to quit. It’s usually other adults who make us exclaim, “Enough already!”

Elijah had taken care of the children in his life, he had endured hundreds of miles of travel, he had done everything he could do to work for change, to inspire a people, to fight for God’s cause. And what was he met with? The raging anger of a partisan politician, Jezebel, who threatened, no, promised to end his life. A swell of fear sent Elijah fleeing to the wilderness and the desert of despair and isolation.

I think this is the most challenging aspect of our Christian vocation as well, to speak truth to political power, to be engaged in solving the most persistent social problems in our nation and in our city. John Calvin insisted on the importance of civic leadership. “No one ought to doubt,” he wrote in his Institutes, “that civil authority is a calling, not only holy and lawful before God, but also the most sacred and by far the most honorable of all callings in the whole life of mortal men.”

And yet this high office is so often tarnished. I read NC Senator Thom Goolsby’s comments in the T-ville Times about a protest being held in Raleigh called “Moral Mondays”. Goolsby suggested the protests be renamed “Moron Mondays” and that the protesters are “mostly white, angry, aged former hippies.” This kind of degrading rhetoric has no place in our political arena. The challenges facing our communities are too real and the work that must be done is too great to spoil it with hateful, empty speech. Like Elijah, I find myself wanting to slink off to an empty room instead of committing to a community of diverse people. To take a good long nap instead of doing the hard work of making social change.

But every now and then, I hear a word of hope in my ear and it's as if a loaf of bread and a jar of refreshment appear by my head. Every now and then, when I've had enough of politicking, and board meetings, and community activism, a messenger speaks to me and restores my strength.

See Video here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AwFPV-tH2QM&list=PLQUKsN9HVS62IVknb5NZ-q8m323iXvSMQ>

This is the award winning video that helped earn Thomasville the title "All-American City". It is a hopeful example of a community of people working together to provide for the needs of children, families, and veterans. It is a reminder of our own high calling to engage this community and its leaders in order to make the good news of God's beloved community a concrete reality. It is but a hopeful glimpse, a morsel of possibility, but it is "enough."

To persevere in our communal calling, we must feast on hope and the promise of new life; otherwise the journey will be too great for us.

So get up Church, come and eat.