

1 Kings 17.1-12

Elijah the Tishbite, who was one of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As God, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

Then God's word came to him, saying, "Go away from here, turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith that is before the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook. I have commanded the ravens to feed you there." So he went and did according to God's word; for he went and lived by the brook Cherith that is before the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the

evening; and he drank from the brook. After a while, the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

God's word came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain you."

So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her, and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink."

As she was going to get it, he called to her, and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."

She said, "As God lives, I don't have a cake, but a handful of meal in a jar, and a little oil in a jar. Behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and bake it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

"I've had enough!" You understand that I am speaking in Elijah's voice and not my own!

Yet, certainly that is what Elijah must have been thinking at this time in his life. Such a thought or attitude certainly strikes a familiar chord with us. At times we think or even say, “I’ve had enough.”

Elijah was thinking about the situation in his nation, as well as his immediate personal problems. “I’ve had it!”

Israel was sinking into idolatry – more than a compromise, it was a complete sell-out to the degrading practices of false religion. The worship of God was ridiculed, and then banned. Elijah was tired of the superficiality of the false religion, the lying prophets, and the immorality.

But he also was anxious about his personal problems. He was depressed. He had been rejected. He seemed to have no purpose.

Elijah was an emotional person, with a hot temper, which made a complicated situation even more so.

In his despair he had retreated to a mountain where there was a little stream of clear water that continued to run despite the drought that had hit all Israel hard.

With all of his troubles and frustrations he brooded by this little stream. “Well, at least I have water to drink and food to eat while the land and people suffer from heat and drought.”

Then, one morning he went to the stream to drink, and it was dry!

Well, we could have predicted that, couldn't we have? Doesn't it seem that things just sort of pile on – one thing adds to another. When we have troubles it seems to attract other troubles and situations.

I would lose my “preacher’s union card” if I did not use events my life as an illustration. You also know me enough to know that I can see humor in a lot of things. So there I am – Lillian has passed away in November, and I am spending November and December recovering from knee replacement surgery and not able to drive. None of that is the humorous part, by the way. In early December, just to add to it, I get a summons for jury duty!

Just like Elijah, the stream ran dry. Just that little extra annoyance made me think, “I’ve had it!”

What did Elijah do? Well, he does what God tells him to do. Elijah wanders down the mountain to the little village of Zarephath. There he sees a widow who was preparing the last bit of food that she had for herself and her starving son.

That widow was probably the only person in that little village who was in a worse situation than Elijah. He asks her to bring him just a little water and a biscuit, but she doesn’t even have that!

I can imagine what ran through Elijah’s mind: “Oh really, God, there’s more to my troubles? I’ve had it.”

That was probably his first thought, but what does Elijah do and say to the widow? Let's return to the passage at verse 13:

Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go and do as you have said; but make me a little cake from it first, and bring it out to me, and afterward make some for you and for your son. For God, the God of Israel says, 'The jar of meal will not run out, and the jar of oil will not fail, until the day that God sends rain on the earth.'"

She went and did according to the saying of Elijah; and she, and he, and her house, ate many days. The jar of meal didn't run out, and the jar of oil didn't fail, according to God's word, which he spoke by Elijah.

Now here is a small thought for us at this point: “The stream may run dry, but the jar will be full.”

If it seems that God has failed for you, just wait for the next step. Yes, we trust God, but it seems that it has not worked out. Let’s wait for what God is preparing.

And I cannot help but mention (another small thought) that what God was preparing for Elijah only came about when Elijah turned from his own situation toward someone else – the widow and her son.

To be a follower of Jesus is to engage in the activity of living; recognizing that by such activity will come understanding of what it means to follow

Jesus. Elijah hid himself in a cave in the mountains; but God drew him out of that cave and into life again.

Elijah's initial instincts were good. In his despondency and confusion he went to the mountains. We see that often in the Bible. Just two examples are good enough. Moses goes up into the mountains to meet God and hear God's invitation to lead His people out of slavery. Later, at a turning point in the wilderness wanderings, Moses again goes to the mountains to meet God again, and returns with the Law that forms the people of God.

Then Jesus, after His baptism, goes into the mountains of the wilderness where He is tempted, but in that temptation He becomes clear about the shape and purpose of His activity.

“I’ve had it!” thought Elijah. Where did he go? He went to the mountains to be with God. He went to the place where his faith told him he could find God – and his own life again.

You and I do not need to go to mountains, but when we have those times when we lose contact with God and our own life, we need to return to that “place” – sometimes a real place, other times a spiritual place – where we last had contact, where we last knew our direction, where we last heard God’s invitation to join Him.

Dad used to tell of the time when a layperson gave him the key to the church where he had made his public profession of faith at the age of sixteen. The layperson said, “You may want to come back some time to sit quietly with the Lord and to kneel at this altar where you began your journey following Jesus.”

Dad would say that he would go back sometimes and kneel at that altar where he was baptized; and sit in the pew where he sat with his mother and father. He would remember the old hymns and that “great cloud of witnesses.”

“I’ve had it.” It amazes me how patient and understanding God is. God did not reprimand Elijah. God took Elijah where he needed to be to receive what he needed – and to give to another what she needed.

Go to the mountain, yes, and reconnect with God; then go back down to the activity of living where God will be at work for you and through you.

What is the primary focus of our faith? Really, I should ask, “What is God’s purpose for you and me?”

God’s purpose is not to lay down rules so that I can be punished or rewarded based on my adherence to those rules. God’s purpose is that

we should “know” Him. That is “Bible talk” that means God wants to have a personal, intimate, and loving relationship with us. Go to the mountain to know God, then go down to the activity of living to join God and thereby know Him better – more deeply.

Then let me add another thought that occurs to me. Growing up I knew a character whose name was “Earnest T. Bass.” He was aptly named after the character in the old “Andy Griffith Show.” Earnest T. Bass did what he wanted with utter disregard for the general rules of conduct. He had the behavior of a dog, which was appropriate since he was a beagle; and he was what he was.

We must act like who we are. In the activity of life we should act like who we are.

We have freedom to act any way we choose – with no relationship to God, with no responsibilities, with no aspirations, with no love or faith. That is not who we are. Through faith we are the Lord's. What we do is not based on any rules, but on to whom we belong. We are the Lord's.

Now all of this is to say that in the troubles, the disillusionment, the frustrations that happen in life, we need to know what to do. How should we respond? In what direction should our efforts be?

Remember who you are. God came to you in Jesus. God has set for us the way to wholeness of life – to be forgiven, reconciled, and saved now

and eternally. Your resources for living are unlimited and eternal. Your strength is that of the strength of God.

God has made a great promise to each of us. We are entitled to expect God to keep His promise to us – to you.

Agnes Maud Royden-Shaw was an English preacher who was born in 1876 and died in 1956. She was the first women in Britain to receive a Doctor of Divinity. She campaigned for the ordination of women in the Church of England.

She first met Rev. Hudson Shaw in 1901 and fell in love with him. He was married, though. Forty-three years later in 1944, Rev. Shaw's wife passed away.

On October 2, 1944, Maud (age 78) married the recently widowed Hudson (age 85). They were married less than two months, when he died.

Maud Royden-Shaw once wrote, "The reason our public life is so disordered and our private life is so hampered by anxiety is because we will not be still and know God."

Dr. Royden could have been writing to Elijah, or to me. Elijah went to where he knew he could find God. He knew God and his promises. Then, he went back to active living.

God wants us to know Him and to receive His promise of abundant and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. What a wonderful opportunity to conclude with what Paul writes: “[God] is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or conceive.”