

Fed up!

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

1 Kings 19:4–8 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." <sup>5</sup> And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." <sup>6</sup> And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. <sup>7</sup> And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." <sup>8</sup> And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

In the book 'Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes. Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible,' the authors remind us that to understand biblical texts you need to understand the context. At seminary this is taught as investigating 'the world behind the text'; what, when, where, and if we can, why this was written. (The 'three worlds' model of Biblical Exegesis is the world behind the text, the world of the text, the world in front of the text).

It might be useful here to do that for Elijah, opening to 1 Kings 17 we might quickly walk through the previous chapters.

In chapter 16 we see a series of Kings of Israel, and we probably need a reminder here that this is the divided Kingdom, with Judah in the South and Israel in the North. There are several kings, some with a little narrative to go with them, but none of them really do anything worth recording again.

1 Kings 16:29–33 (ESV) **Ahab Reigns in Israel**

<sup>29</sup> In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. <sup>30</sup> And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. <sup>31</sup> And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. <sup>32</sup> He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. <sup>33</sup> And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

Here we have the escalation of the end of Israel!

Then we learn that Elijah on God's command has spoken a drought into the land.

1 Kings 17:1 (ESV) **Elijah Predicts a Drought**

**17** Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

Elijah goes bush after this account so that God can preserve him from the drought and famine. We get the strange and miraculous account of Elijah being fed by ravens and then the extended story of the widow of Zarephath, all used to preserve Elijah's life.

Three years pass, Elijah is called back into the land, speaks rain back into the land, and deals with the prophets of Baal. In doing so he shows that Baal is only an idol and God is the true God. Subsequently, Jezebel the Queen puts out her death threat, not that she wanted him alive in the first place, but now she really hates him.

This is where our reading for today fits. Elijah is on the run after doing the work of God. He is fed up for a whole range of reasons. He says 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers'.

Elijah was fed up because:

- no one listened to him - and therefore they did not listen to God
- the queen wanted to kill him – she was evil
- he was just plain exhausted – all this running around to escape death
- he was reminded that he was a poor miserable sinner

He lays down to sleep. We should imagine it was not a peaceful or comfortable place to sleep. He's exhausted from running from the Queen, maybe he just flops to the ground with his cry 'Lord, I'll die now please'. Maybe he curls up in the fetal position with no one to comfort him, no one to console him, and he cries himself to sleep. After running a marathon, some runners feel totally wiped out. They really want to sleep, but their sore muscles and racing thoughts make it hard to doze off. It can be restless at best for a few days. There is a level of exhaustion where sleep becomes hard.

God is not ready for Elijah to die (Elijah never dies 2 Kings 2:11). Instead, God comes to Elijah in the midst of his exhausted sleep. And the food gives him immense strength.

And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

God feeds Elijah to elevate his exhaustion but also to give him strength for the next part of his mission. God does not remove the difficulties but gives the strength to live through them. After being so fed up that he wanted to die, God fills Elijah up with heavenly food, gives him a reason to trust in his promises, and delivers on those promises. Elijah goes from fed up, to fed up.

Have you ever been fed up with God, his church, maybe even yourself? Many of us get fed up, with things that others do in the church, we get fed up with the behaviour of our society, we get fed up, like Paul, with our own sinful nature.

What might make us fed up?

- The Government
  - why don't they do their job
  - or that they are completely evil
  - The government seems out to get me,
- His church
  - I've done all this work for you God, and now I'm exhausted, and for what benefit?
  - Why are we still arguing over the same issues
  - Why can't people do what they are elected to do
  - Why does the church seem intent on destroying itself
- No one comes to Church or wants to listen
- We realize or are reminded that the world is full of sinners
- We realize I'm one of those sinners

You know, the things that cause you to think like Elijah; I've had enough, I'm fed up with this, God!

I remember the advice I received from a friend while we were living in Alice Springs. A little context is required here. When we went to Alice, everyone knew that we had been at ALC ('the Sem'). The first thing that happened was the congregation gave us things to do, they put us on committees, gave us jobs in worship, asked us to do

things in the congregation. Now that was fine. But there came a time when I was fed up with a whole list of things. Here is the advice my friend gave;

- Stop giving – financially
- Stop giving of yourself – serving
- Stop going

That will make them listen to you

It seemed to me at the time this was poor advice. While it is true the setting for our gospel narrative in John 6 is Jesus trying to get away for a time to himself, he's not trying to get away from fulfilling his mission, he's not avoiding people to prove a point, he's out there resting, praying, and being given sustenance from the Father. Just as Elijah received his food and water. Secondly, if we believe what we preach regarding God's Word and His sacraments, the only way to be fed is to be in His Word and use His sacraments. Running away from the place where those things are is never going to sustain us. Instead, God's servants need to be fed, in the same way that the recipients of God's word need to be fed.

Jesus gives us better advice in the gospel, he tells us there that the food we seek when we are fed up with life is not from this earth, it comes down from heaven. 'I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'" John 6:51 (ESV)

This is the food that God offers to us; he sends his Holy Angel to deliver the food.

Elijah lays down, makes his complaint and asks to die. Lying in exhausted sleep, he is fed with bread and water, delivered by the angel, Jesus. This sustained him to make his 40-day journey. When we are fed up, and exhausted, we are fed by Jesus, delivered in the Word, the bread and wine and the water. We are sent out, sustained by his life-giving bread.

When we are fed up! Jesus comes to us; he feeds us with himself. This is the offensive claim in John 6, that Jesus comes from heaven to feed the world with himself. Time to ourselves might be good for a rest, but time away with Christ to hear his Word and talk with him is the food that we need. That is what our service is designed to deliver to you, the gifts of God, to sustain you all the days of your life. Don't heed the advice of our society that would encourage us to leave the church when we are fed up, heed the words of your Saviour who says, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.' John 6:35 (ESV)

When you are fed up, and even when you are not, come to him and eat, believe in him and be filled. Be fed up with the bread of life.

Amen

The peace of God that surpasses all our understanding keep your hearts and your minds safe in Christ Jesus. Amen.