

We've Come Too Far to Turn Back Now

By: Meagan McLaughlin

August 8, 2021. When Elijah has hit the wall in 1 Kings, God shows up and provides exactly what he needs. No judgment, no expectations, no requirement that Elijah pretend to be energetic and strong when he is clearly not. Just understanding, bread and water, and permission to rest. We all know that feeling of exhaustion, and in her sermon today Pastor Meagan reminds us how encouraging it is to know that God understands it too.

Readings: [1 Kings 19:4-8](#), [Ephesians 4:25-5:2](#), [John 6:35, 41-51](#)

*** Transcript ***

Elijah has been on a really long, hard journey — one that is far from over — and he is exhausted. He has been doing what he knows God is calling him to do, speaking truth to power in the form of the king. Elijah is one of the only faithful prophets left alive, and they want to kill him too. Worse, Elijah feels that he has failed God. He is, frankly, ready to die, and he has no qualms about letting God know that. Then Elijah does the only thing he can do: he lays down and takes a nap.

And God sends an angel to him there, bearing exactly what he needed. Not once but twice, the angel wakes Elijah so that he can eat bread so fresh it's still warm, and drink water. And once he has eaten, and drank, and slept, he travels 40 days and 40 nights on the strength of that food, to Mount Horeb. The rest, water, and bread do not shorten the journey or eliminate the threat to Elijah's life, but it is exactly what Elijah needs to give him the strength to make it through.

We all feel it sometimes: that feeling that, whatever our journey, whatever the struggle, it's just too much to handle. We have tried to keep going, and finally we just can't do it. Some years ago, when I was going through a really hard time on a really long journey, I got a call from my Aunt Kathie saying she was coming over because she had something for me. When she and her friend arrived, Kathie handed me a painting that she had painted herself for me. I looked at it, stunned that she had done this for me. And then she said, "Its name is *Hope*." And her friend said, determinedly, "And its other name is *Meagan*."

In that moment, I don't think there is anything that could have meant more to me than that painting, and the sentiment behind it. When I was at the end of my proverbial rope, God gave me just what I needed, through the hands and hearts of these two women. The journey I was on was far from over and there were more struggles to come, but this gift was exactly what I needed to buoy my sagging spirit and rest my tired soul so I could keep going. Just when I had reached a point of feeling like it might be time to give up, I was quite literally given the gift of *Hope*.

In one of my favorite scenes in the movie "Selma," Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., like Elijah, feels like he has failed, and is about ready to quit. During their first attempt to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the marchers were brutally attacked, and more than one person lost their life. Dr. King is exhausted, feels responsible for what has happened, and can't fathom asking people to make that sacrifice again.

He shares the struggle with John Lewis, at the time a young local leader, and in response John tells Dr. King about a time when he felt that way too, and on the darkest morning made his way to church to hear Dr. King preach. Dr. King doesn't remember it, so John Lewis tells him what he said: "Fear not.

We've come too far to turn back now." Dr. King's words were exactly what a young John Lewis needed to keep going, and some years later John Lewis returned the words to Dr. King, giving him the strength to continue the journey. Fear not. We've come too far to turn back now.

We all know that feeling of exhaustion, we all have those stories, and it is so encouraging to know that God understands it too. When Elijah has hit the wall, God shows up and provides exactly what he needs. No judgment, no expectation that Elijah will immediately leap up and keep going, no requirement that Elijah pretend to be energetic and strong when he is clearly not. Just understanding, bread and water, permission to rest — before continuing 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Horeb. Perhaps this is some of what Paul is talking about in his letter to the Ephesians. Be honest, be angry, but don't sin, and let God work through you for the good of all.

And Jesus tells his followers today, one more time, on this third week of bread, that God provides everything we need. We are so intimately connected with God's abundance, that in Christ we will never be hungry again. The journey is long and hard sometimes, and God is with us all the way. In turning to God, we find the bread we need to keep going, spiritually, physically, emotionally.

How is it with your soul today? What weariness and struggle are you living with that needs to be honestly shared? What do you need to rest and nourish your body and spirit so that you can continue the journey? What bread, water, and sleep can you offer to others who are too tired to keep going?

We have two more weeks of Jesus' bread of life discourse left, and still the message remains the same. God provides what we need, sometimes in the ways we least expect. Fear not. We've come too far to turn back now. There is always enough, and more.

Thanks be to God.

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