

Pastor Jordan Gades Sermon 8.8.21 – 1 Kings 19:4-8

So today we get to hear a little bit about the story of Elijah. Now to properly get to the message that I think we need to hear today there needs to be a little background story told. Now this is not some boring prophet from the old testament who did some stuff a loooooong time ago. Elijah is the real deal of prophets. He's the mold upon which every stereotypical prophet you might have in your mind comes from. I'm not Joking, if you made a movie out of what he did, you'd have a classic Hollywood blockbuster.

I'll pitch it to you. Let's set the scene, Black screen, soft middle eastern music swells in, golden words in a fancy type materialize on the screen and dissolve away, sentence after sentence. In the middle of the 9th century BC, the kingdom of God is divided against itself. In the north rages the lust and idolatry of a kingdom led by a weak king and his vicious queen Jezebel. In the south, the kingdom is in disrepair after years of neglect after the rule of one selfish king after another.

Faith in the God that led these kingdoms' ancestors out of bondage and faith in that same God who gave them this land as their own has crumbled to almost nothing. Only one man remains who can turn the tide. Elijah: Prophet of the Ages.

Wow I really wish this was the type of movie that was getting made about the bible. Get a nice budget, add a little bit of decent CGI, some decent actors who can pull off the range of emotions that comes with the story of Elijah and bam, you got a blockbuster. But maybe that last one on that list for the actors would be the hardest to really pull off.

Elijah's story really is one of immense highs and cratering lows. In just the 4 verses that we heard of his story today we see him at one of the disastrous lows.

*Elijah 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.*

He's obviously more than a little bummed out. I'm thinking Daniel Day Lewis for the Role here, need that depth. Now what's even more startling is that this is immediately after one of Elijah's biggest highs. This is right after the mount Carmel, this would be like one of the biggest, most expensive scenes in this film because you just gotta nail it. Elijah challenges the priests of Baal to see which deity is more powerful, priest of Baal try all day, nothing happens, Elijah steps up calls down fire from heaven to light this soaking wet altar, and then, triumphant in this insane act of power has all 500 of these Baal priests killed. Score one for the good guys right. Ok maybe there are some problematic parts to this story that might have to worked out in post, but that's not what we are talking about today.

Elijah wins, Elijah show off the power of God. This should be a turning point for all of Israel and Judah. God is here! God is Great! And nothing. The exact opposite infact. Elijah finds himself alone. This cosmic act of power did nothing to convince anyone of turning to God.

I think right there is something that so so many of us can relate to. Especially with Elijah's feelings right after. The guy, like any hero in any story, puts himself on the line. If God wouldn't have shown up, he would have died. Elijah gives it his all. He is going up against

everyone, using every ounce of courage and determination that he has been given. Elijah works his heart out to make sure all the pieces are in place for this miracle to happen. And despite all that Elijah did, and even supposedly all that God did, it means nothing. There are those times in your life where you've given it all, and in the end, it seemingly meant nothing. We've felt like Elijah, maybe not the "o lord, take away my life" but we felt utterly defeated before. Maybe we felt this way during Covid, maybe it was at work, maybe it was amongst your family or friends. And it would be at this point in our standard Hollywood blockbuster that our hero would toss aside that failure and all the emotions that went with it. Our hero would display a reckless amount of gumption and somehow "Pull themselves up by their bootstraps"

Aside.

But anyway, that's not how it happens for Elijah, that is not a story of our faith. Elijah gives up and lays down to never get up again and who awakens him?

*Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." 6He 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. 7The 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." 8He 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.*

Here is a fundamental tenet of our faith. God provides. God cares for us. We are not doing this thing called life by ourselves.

Elijah rests, God feeds Elijah, and what's that God gives Elijah more time to rest. Here is where the story veers from any star-studded cinematic scene that I've ever seen. I don't know how they could make a montage on a man who is spiritually and physically exhausted being tender loved and cared for by angels sent by his creator.

The care that God provides is a healing patient love. It is not demanding but rather strengthening. It is not cosmic, it is personal, it is in that touch that God restores. That is the touch that God is giving you today. That is the touch that you can give freely today. The story of Elijah is being lived out again and again in our everyday normal lives. We try and we try and try again and we push in our lives. God sees how you work. We all see how hard we all work. And no matter the outcome this story of Elijah shows the way that we should respond to all who are weary and heavy burdened. With Grace, with compassion, with Love. A love that scoops you up and lets you truly rest and be restored. That is true power of our God, not in reigning fire from heaven but rather healing those who are hurt and alone. That is the power that will turn a person, that changes a person. That's the part of the story which means the most, when you were hurt and you were loved. That's the part of the grand story that we are invited into today as we gather and as we are sent out. Let us see those who are hurt and let us give them the love that they need to be healed, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen.