

Sunday, August 12 at St. Anne's Parish in Annapolis, Maryland
Text: 1 Kings 19: 4-8
Sermon by the Rev'd. Timothy J. Mulder

Ahab, the king of Israel in the 9th century BC did not care for God or the citizens he ruled. He cared only for himself. He married Jezebel who worshiped the agricultural and fertility gods of her homeland, known as Ba'al, and decided set up temples to Ba'al throughout Israel.

The god of the Hebrews was displeased and sent Elijah to inform the king that the consequence of his disloyalty was that a draught was to come to the land. Elijah, by the way, means, "My god is YHWH." There are lots of gods; Elijah was clear who he worshiped. Ahab called Elijah an old troublemaker, and a few other things, too.

Elijah challenged Jezebel and her gods to a duel. Jezebel sent 450 of her priests to compete against Elijah. The idea was to find out which god would bring down fire on a sacrifice when the priests prayed. Elijah's prayer did, but the priests' of Ba'al did not. Jezebel was so mad she sent her army to kill Elijah. Elijah ran as fast and far as he could. He hid in a cave. He hid in the bushes. He hid under the only tree he could find in the wilderness. And then he gave up.

Is there anyone here who hasn't at some point gotten tired of what you need to do in life, of doing the right thing? Sometimes it's easier not to stand firm for the right thing; to say that the tides are too strong in the other direction, so we go with the flow. We don't say "no" to our kids, we don't tell our friend that joke is racist, we don't report the bully or inappropriate behavior at work.

Then maybe you come to the point Elijah did and find yourself just sucking wind under the inadequate shade of some broom tree. You may be battling an illness. You may be at the end of your rope in your marriage. You may have worked so hard in life but the money just isn't enough for the needs.

You find yourself under the broom tree and just say, "Enough. I give up. Take my life; I don't want it anymore, can't do it, don't know what to do any more. Enough." But in his "enoughness," Elijah fell asleep.

In reply to Elijah's cry of "Enough!," God replies that we will be supplied with more than enough for our life's journey.

I don't know if it was dream or the refreshment of sleep, but suddenly an angel was shaking him saying, "Get up and eat." There is food set before him, good food. It must be a dream. A second time the angel says, "Hey, you! I said get up! Eat! You've got a long way to go and you'll need this or you won't make it."

So Elijah, "My god is YHWH," gets up, eats and walks 40 days to Horeb. Do you remember Horeb? It is where Moses saw the burning bush. God was present to Moses there and called him to be the liberator of the slaves there. Horeb, in the book of Deuteronomy, or Sinai in the book of Exodus, same place; is where God gave the 10 Commandments. Elijah is given the strength to go to the place where he meets God and where God is known to call us to service and show us the ways of life. Where is your Horeb?

I encourage you to get in touch, to stay in touch with the places and ways that nourish you for your journey. It may be time in nature, or with a good book or music, or a loved one, or maybe even your work. We need to know and to connect with that which nourishes us. But sometimes even those are not enough, and it is then that we know, somewhere deep within us, that we need God to nourish us as only God can.

Every Sunday when I come to church, to this altar, it is as though I hear a voice saying, “Tim, rise and eat, or else the journey will be too much for you.” We get tired sometimes, weary of the battles, the forces of wrong that seem so great; why not just give up? But the voice tells us there’s more to do, and that God will feed us here, give us strength, and power and joy and all we need to make it, and not just to make it, but to succeed in the fullness of life and love. God will never give up on us, and the will of God is that we not give up on God either. Rise and eat, or else the journey will be too much for you. Is your name Elijah, too?