

Brothers and Sisters, I am so glad you have gathered here today, because I have good news for you indeed. The Lord told me in a dream last night that if you just believe harder, give more freely, commit more boldly, your life will be wonderful. You will call your credit card company and they will tell you your balance is 0. Your mortgage company will send you a statement stamped paid in full. Your estranged husband will return, your lost son will come back, and your land will grow crops like there is no tomorrow. If you only believe!

Elijah himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.

Turn on many Christian preachers on the radio or TV and you are likely to here a sermon much like the ranting at the beginning of my sermon. They will tell you that if you believe enough, give enough, commit enough, all the world will be yours as a Christian. What you won't hear on the radio too often is a sermon that talks about the Christian life at times being so frustrating that you would ask God to take your life. That kind of message just doesn't sell in today world. However, that is exactly the kind of message you are going to get today. I am going to preach about a prophet named Elijah who was as low as one can get. And even though that type of message doesn't sell on TV or the radio, I hope that I can find some buyers in the congregation.

The reason I am confident that I might find a buyer or two among the crowd here today is because I know that there are people in the congregation today who probably feel they can relate to an exhausted, worn out, depressed Elijah quite well. They just can't

relate to a preacher who drives the finest cars and the live in the biggest home and promises the same for anyone who believes his words.

Elijah was no doubt a man who knew that God could do anything, that He could bring great success. Just shortly before where our text picks up, Elijah had defeated the prophets of Baal. I am sure you remember the story. The prophets of Baal prepare an altar and a sacrifice and pray to their god to consume it. However, nothing happens. So then Elijah dowses his sacrifice in water and call upon God. Fire falls from heaven and consumes the water and the sacrifice in a flash. But now, just short time later, after all that glory, Elijah sits dejected under a tree. This particular type of tree was probably a good symbol of how Elijah felt. You see this particular type of tree was one that grew in the desert, and a little shade was no doubt a wonderful thing in the desert. But the bad news about this type of tree was that it just didn't block out many of the sun's hot rays as one would wish. For Elijah, the victory over the prophets of Baal was a tree in the desert kind of experience, a miracle indeed. But a show of that magnitude didn't stop the constant hot rays of his of persecution he felt his whole life long. Elijah spent a majority of his life running for his life. The king and his wife hated Elijah for worshipping God and speaking his word. And even after the all those present at the battle between Ball and the Elijah's God declared that Elijah's God was the true God, the king's wife, Jezebel, didn't stop her pursuit. And now he sat once again alone under a tree. As he sat there he began to say something like this, "Take my life and let it end, quickly Lord my death do send. It is over, I am through; Take me Lord to be with you."

But God's answer to Elijah's prayer was not a speedy yes. Oh yes, sometime later, God did grant Elijah perhaps he most spectacular exit from this world ever

witnessed up to that point, a chariot of fire. But it was not yet his time. Rather, Elijah was told by an angel of God to rise and eat. Actually he was told twice to eat because rather than speedy rescue Elijah had wanted, he had a long journey ahead. But God's reassured him that he did not go alone. So there in the desert, God fed him to prepare for the journey. He provided for his physical needs, but also provided for the needs of his soul.

Have you ever been where Elijah was? Are you there now? You know, you try your best to live your life the way God wants you to, but yet life wears you out. You have stuck with your spouse through many awful experiences and nothing is getting better. You are ready to quit. You have tried to raise your rebellious child in the way of God and see only more rebellion. You are tired. You stick up for Jesus at school and all it gets you is made fun of. You are sick of the fight. I suppose it is not under a tree that you find yourself at the end of the day. More likely you crawl into bed at night with tears soaking your pillow and say, "God it is enough. I am ready to go." Or perhaps it is at the office or on the tractor in the field that you pause to wonder how much longer you can go on living for God with how hard it is. You tell him to take you as soon as possible.

Wouldn't it be so much easier if the Christian life was the non-stop joy, non-stop prosperity, non-stop fun that the TV preachers promised. Wouldn't it be nice if we could sing, "Take my life and let it be full of joy and big TVs, No more pain and no more tears, just a life that full of cheers."

But the bible tells us time and time again that this is not an accurate picture of the Christian life on earth. If you want proof, we can simply remember where living the perfect life got Jesus. It took him to ridicule, to mockery, and to the cross. And Jesus

made no bones about it. He told his disciples to expect the same even worse if they were to follow Him.

Living for God doesn't mean that life will be easy. In fact, it often means that we will have much trouble from those who do not believe in our God. The world hated Jesus and they will hate us to if they see Him in us. It is not that there are no moments of joy, laughter, and good times in the Christian life. No, we just like Elijah will see our share of God's miraculous, joy creating miracles. But it does mean that we can expect those times of joy to be interrupted with persecution from time to time. But thankfully when we sit under the juniper trees of our lives, we do not sit alone. God is present there also. Whether you are there today or whether you are in a time of joy right now, know that when you are there under that tree, God will likely say to you also, "get up and eat." He will provide for your physical needs to give you the energy to walk, and He will provide for your spiritual needs to give you the energy to walk with Him.

If you are under the tree today, it is a good thing you are here. Even if you are just on your way, it is good that you are here. Because, here today again is food for your soul to eat. Gobble up God's word. Feast on his forgiveness. Begin to salivate for God's supper next week. This food that God gives to us in good times and bad is the best food we could imagine. It is food that was prepared by the one who did more than sit under a tree, he hung from one for you and me. And please don't just need to eat once. Eat at church. Eat at bible Study. Eat at your homes when you open his Word. Keep eating, because for most of us here, the journey ahead is still long. Eventually, we too will have our amazing exit to paradise. But for now, "Arise and eat." Because it is only having been fed by God that we can sing the true anthem of the Christian life, "Take my life and

let it be, Consecrated, Lord, to Thee; Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in
ceaseless praise.”

Amen.