



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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August 27, 2006

12th Sunday after Pentecost

1 Kings 19:3-8

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: 1 Kings 19:3-8

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 34

Second Lesson: Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Gospel: John 6:41-51

When is Enough, Enough?

As a child, when my folks went away for the weekend, the place I usually went to stay at was my aunt's house. There were a couple of cousins that were older than I am, and when you are the younger cousin, what do you like to do to your older cousins? You try to jump on them. You try to pick a fight with them. You try to wrestle with them. You get into all kinds of wrestling matches with them in the living room. At least that is what I thought a younger cousin should do. So then I would have these two older cousins and eventually they would pin me on the ground and they would have both their knees on my shoulders or something like that, or on my arms so I couldn't get away and then they would say, "Cry uncle. Had enough? Cry uncle." So naturally you can't get away and you can't move so you cry uncle because you have had enough, right?

Have you ever had that happen to you? What did you do then when you got up? What did you do as soon as they turned around? Did you jump on them again because you really hadn't had enough? You just had enough of being pinned down, right? It wasn't enough yet. It was just "cry uncle" because I want to get in a better position so I can beat on you a little bit, right? At least that is how I viewed it as a kid. Enough wasn't enough.

Now that I watch other children jumping on each other and I listen to it for a little while and I say, "Enough!"—I'm pretty sure enough is enough and it is time to knock it off because I can't take the noise any longer.

Sometimes we have a definite idea of when enough is enough, but a lot of times we are wrong. Sometimes in our life we say to God, "Enough is enough already God. I am tired of this illness. I'm tired of this struggle in my relationship. I'm tired of this struggle in my efforts to serve you. Enough is enough Lord. I want out of this problem" or difficulty or whatever it might be. We think we are pretty certain enough is enough.

But as we look at this instance from the life of Elijah, a man who was very convinced "I've had enough Lord," we learn something about when is enough, enough. Christians are going to have times in their lives, just like Elijah, when we think the answer is "I have had enough Lord." But sometimes when those things happen, just like with Elijah, the Lord is going to come to us and say, "I alone am enough for you to sustain you through what you think you can't get through." It is an important lesson for us to learn because we live in a world that is ruined by sin and there are going to be many times when we want to say "enough is enough."

Elijah had come to this point in time interestingly enough after one of the great highs of his life and the great highs of his service to God. Do you remember Elijah and the prophets of Baal there on Mount Carmel—450 prophets of Baal and Elijah said, “Hey, guys, people of Israel, you have to decide. Are you going to serve Baal or are you going to serve the Lord because you can’t go on thinking you are going to serve both. Choose whom you are going to serve. Here is how we are going to choose. How about this—we each get a bull; we slaughter it and put it on an altar. You call on Baal. I will call on the Lord. Whichever one consumes the offering with fire, he is the one to worship and the other one is garbage.” It sounds good. They do that. The 450 prophets of Baal go first and nothing happens. They keep calling on their god from morning until noon and Elijah engages in some trash talk. He says, “Shout a little louder. Maybe he is sleeping. Maybe he is on vacation. Cut yourself. Maybe that will get his attention.” Nothing happens. Elijah builds the altar, digs a trench, pours water on the offering after it has been placed there and then calls on God. God consumes it by fire. The people then go and kill the 450 prophets of Baal.

But just that miracle wasn’t enough. Elijah called on the Lord and prayed and even though it hadn’t rained for such a long time (a number of years), rain came. Now he goes back to where Jezebel is in the capital city and he is convinced that now the people will turn back to the Lord. Enough is enough. They are going to come back and turn away from Baal and Jezebel is going to quit persecuting the prophets and life on earth is going to get better. Jezebel says, “You killed my prophets. I am going to kill you.” Then we meet Elijah. Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. From one of the highest highs to one of the lowest lows in six seconds flat.

Did you ever notice that at times in life? You are going along and things are going real good and all of a sudden, just like you hit a brick wall, something happens that just knocks you off of that high that you are enduring. When you think you can do anything, all of a sudden things have a way of coming along and at times knocking us off that horse.

So Elijah runs for his life and as he is running for his life, evidently as he thinks it over he comes to the conclusion that life isn’t worth living. He journeys to Beersheba, leaves his servant there and goes out by himself in the desert, a whole days journey and finds a broom tree, a little bush actually, and sits down under it in some shade and says to God, “God, I’ve had enough. I’m no better than my forefathers. Just take my life and get me out of here. I am a failure.” This sounds like someone that is in a pretty dark and deep pit, who is living in the blackness of depression and wants nothing more than to escape from any responsibility or anything that this life would offer. The walls are coming in and he feels overwhelmed. He feels like he is drowning. Use whatever picture you want, but you can understand this, can’t you?

We live in a sinful world. There are going to be times in life when we are going to have some of these thoughts come into our lives. “I can’t take it anymore.” And even as we serve the Lord, even in the ministry, there are these kinds of things where you feel like saying, “You know, I kind of like the idea of handing out a cart at Wal-Mart. No one there is going to spread rumors behind my back. No one there is going to fail to talk to me about my shortcomings. Instead, they are going to just take the cart and walk on.

They aren't going to sit there and go back to the store and say, 'Hey, he doesn't hand out the cart very well. He didn't hand it out the right way. I had to take it from him.' They aren't going to go behind and whine and complain and lack the intestinal fortitude to come and confront someone who they feel has done something wrong." In the ministry, that quite often is the case. Elijah was there. He had the answer—"Let's just get rid of it all God."

It may come in your life in various ways. It may come in your employment. It may come in your relationship with other people. You may have done something that has broken a relationship with a spouse or with a friend and they just won't listen. They won't hear you say, "I'm sorry. I've done wrong. Please forgive me." You are at a loss. You are at your wits ends. You don't know what to do anymore to make things right. You may feel like saying, "I've had enough Lord. Fix it." Sometimes our answer for fixing it is that "enough is enough. I want out." But our God reminds us that that is not the answer. He knows when enough is enough but quite often we don't.

So God in his mercy and in his love doesn't even come and answer Elijah's complaints. He doesn't try to reason with Elijah. He doesn't say, "But I have this or that." He just says, "*Get up and eat*" (1 Kings 19:5). He sends an angel, a messenger of God, who has some food prepared for him who says, "*Get up and eat* (1 Kings 19:5) because you need strength. Your work isn't over yet." Then he says again, "*Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you*" (1 Kings 13:7). Then Elijah eats and is strengthened and he goes 240 miles to Mount Horeb where the Lord is going to have a message for him on what the remainder of his ministry is going to look like. He has some teaching he needs to do with Elijah yet. He needs to set Elijah straight on some things, but he says, "It's not enough. I'm enough to get you through it, and you will get through it, and you will serve me in the way that I want you to serve me." So God comes and lifts him up out of this pit and says, "Focus on me and you will get through this."

We know that to be true. That is why we are here this morning. As Christians we know who our God is and what he has done for us. We know the kind of love he has for us that led him to take away our sins by his perfect life and by his innocent death. We don't doubt his love. We know it. But as we go through life, at times our vision is taken off of our God and it is put on this problem or that problem and we forget the promises of our God. That is why our God at times wants to grab us by the shoulders, turn our heads so we are looking straight at him in his eyes and say to us, "I love you. I am with you. I have taken away your sins and I won't leave you alone now. I will see to it that you can get through whatever you are facing. Even if that person won't forgive you for what you have done, I have forgiven you. I have taken away your sins. And just in case the message that is spoken to you that says I lived and died for you isn't enough, then come receive my body and blood. The very body and blood that took away your sins, and let this heavenly food strengthen you for your journey."

He comes to us through water, through wine, through wafer, through the Word to say to us again, and again and again, "I love you. I will strengthen you. I will get you through it all. Nothing will happen to you beyond what you are able to bear with my help." That is his promise.

But it is only when we are focused on him that we find that strength. Quite often we are like that kid in the living room, aren't we? We say enough is enough and we cry uncle and then we get up and do the same foolish thing that got us into that mess in the first place, right? We get up and we do some of the same foolish things, commit the same sins that created problems for us in the first place and the second time around, the third time around, the fourth time around, the fifth time around, the people that we have offended are not going to be as eager or as ready to forgive us.

But here is the amazing thing about our God—he is. He has forgiven us and he tells us, "My love for you will never be taken away from you. Nothing can separate you from my love." That is what leads us to not cry out uncle, but to cry out "Lord, help me. Strengthen me. Sustain me." One of the things he does is to put us with fellow Christians to point us to God. But fellow Christians aren't always going to do that because they are sinners. That is why it is so important that each and every one of us is close to God in the Word and in the Sacrament so that we are strengthened by God so that we know the Lord is enough and that is all we need.