

First Presbyterian Church, Ware Shoals

07.07.19

1 Kings 19: 1-9

“Nap and a Snack”

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand People (Mark 6: 30-37)

30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught. **31** Many people were coming and going, so there was no time to eat. He said to the apostles, “Come by yourselves to a secluded place and rest for a while.” **32** They departed in a boat by themselves for a deserted place.

33 Many people saw them leaving and recognized them, so they ran ahead from all the cities and arrived before them. **34** When Jesus arrived and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Then he began to teach them many things.

35 Late in the day, his disciples came to him and said, “This is an isolated place, and it’s already late in the day. **36** Send them away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy something to eat for themselves.”

37 He replied, “You give them something to eat.”

But they said to him, “Should we go off and buy bread worth almost eight months’ pay and give it to them to eat?”

Elijah Runs to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19: 1-9)

1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, how he had killed all Baal’s prophets with the sword. **2** Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah with this message: “May the gods do whatever they want to me if by this time tomorrow I haven’t made your life like the life of one of them.”

3 Elijah was terrified. He got up and ran for his life. He arrived at Beer-sheba in Judah and left his assistant there. **4** He himself went farther on into the desert a day’s journey. He finally sat down under a solitary broom bush. He longed for his own death: “It’s more than enough, Lord! Take my life because I’m no better than my ancestors.” **5** He lay down and slept under the solitary broom bush. Then suddenly a messenger tapped him and said to him, “Get up! Eat something!” **6** Elijah opened his eyes and saw flatbread baked on glowing coals and a jar of water right by his head. He ate and drank, and then went back to sleep. **7** The Lord’s messenger returned a second time and tapped him. “Get up!” the messenger said. “Eat something, because you have a difficult road ahead of you.” **8** Elijah got up, ate and drank, and went refreshed by that food for forty

days and nights until he arrived at Horeb, God's mountain. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night.

The Lord's word came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

I have a friend who just graduated from Seminary in May. She is currently working in Florida at a camp near Tampa. She's one of my closest friends and we have spent a lot of time together in the last 2 years while we were both at Columbia. Her name is Jocelyn.

Sometimes, Jocelyn will come to me or another friend and be a bit cranky. I'm sure you've all experienced this crankiness with someone you're close to. She will be frustrated and doesn't want to deal with anyone anymore. Maybe there have been too many decisions to make in that day, or maybe it's just a little too hot outside. No matter what it is, I have learned to read these moods well because I also swing into them sometimes. Jocelyn and our friend group have begun to ask each other 2 simple questions when this is the mood we are in.

I often turn to Jocelyn and say, "Do you need a nap?" we all forget that sometimes life is exhausting and we just need a nap to take a minute to ourselves. If a nap is not what she needs I ask my second question, "Do you need a snack?" This is always followed by the simple question: "Nap and a snack?" which is repeated by Jocelyn and whoever we are around. That is when we all realize, we are all a bit hungry and we find some snacks. Or we take a break from whatever we are doing and take time to get away and nap for a bit. We forget that our bodies need nutrition to function, we need rest to function. We forget that we can't just power through everything without ever giving our bodies rest or nutrition.

Jocelyn actually has what she calls a "theology of potlucks" where there is always enough. I have a "theology of a nap and a snack." This is the theology I have started to hold. There are not many things that can't be fixed by taking a nap or eating a snack. Including but not limited to-- mood swings, being too tired to deal with other humans, not knowing what to do next, being overwhelmed with your task list, and finally, not wanting to do the Greek homework you have been assigned.

When there seems to be nothing else to do to feel better when it feels like you're just going to have a bad day no matter what else happens, sometimes a nap and a snack are all you need to get back on track and have a better day. We see this in our Old Testament scripture, in fact, Elijah is having a pretty rough day. The scripture passage today comes after the story of Elijah at the altar when God sets fire to Elijah's altar, and Baal doesn't show up for the 450 prophets present for Baal. There was mocking, there

was a lot of water on the altar, and yet, God still showed up. Elijah won over the crowds, and still, he's having a bad day.

Though it doesn't seem to be that he's having a rough day because he literally killed hundreds of prophets of Baal (which is a bit concerning), no, today Elijah is having a hard day because Jezebel, Ahab's wife, has threatened to kill him after God showed up at the altar instead of Baal. Apparently, when you kill all the Queen's prophets- it makes her a bit unhappy. After this whole event, Jezebel threatens Elijah saying, "May the gods do whatever they want to me if by this time tomorrow I haven't made your life like the life of one of them." She makes it clear she doesn't really care what the gods think, Elijah is going to be killed.

So instead of dealing with that, and instead of facing and fighting with God against Jezebel, Elijah just runs into the wilderness. He literally runs away because he is so afraid. This isn't just Elijah being a little cranky, or feeling like he doesn't want to do anything for the day. Elijah is beyond scared, so he faces the God of the Universe, and says quite plainly, "Please just kill me now, I am not better than anyone before me." I believe it has to be a pretty low moment to say to God, "please... just end it for me here." But God looks at Elijah and instead of killing him, God has Elijah fall asleep and sends a messenger to make a snack for him. The messenger wakes Elijah up, tells him to eat. Elijah has a lovely snack, some nice, warm, flatbread, and some water. We all know he's probably dehydrated after sleeping under a literal bush. But Elijah eats his snack and falls back asleep. The messenger wakes him up again and makes him eat a second time. For those counting, Elijah gets 2 naps and 2 snacks! Sometimes, one is just simply not enough. This messenger from God has provided Elijah valuable rest, and needed nutrition.

Suddenly, the road ahead doesn't seem so impossible to Elijah. That is the importance of having a nap and a snack if you're stuck. The importance of this passage is that God continued to provide for Elijah, though notice, God did not change the plan that They had for Elijah. But while the plan stayed the same, Elijah needed a moment to himself, and God provided for him at that moment.

As Elijah was hitting an incredibly low moment, God saw and provided a space of refuge for him. An abundance of refuge, 2 naps, 2 snacks, and those provisions provided him rest and nutrition for the 40-day journey to Mount Horeb. God had a plan for Elijah and Elijah needed a minute alone before being able to continue on with the plan. So the question comes down to: how do we do this? How do we trust in God's plan for us but still take the time we need to rest and get nutrients?

God has provided for us every day for our entire lives. God has never turned from us and figured we could do it ourselves. So, we know God will continue to care and

provide for us because the precedent is there. Even in Elijah's case, nothing about the journey ahead of him changed, but he felt more prepared for his journey and he felt ready for it to happen.

Elijah knew himself at that moment and trusted that God would be able to provide if he turned to God in that time of need. There is nothing stopping us in those moments from turning to God and knowing that God will absolutely continue to provide for us. We just have to trust that God will continue to provide. In this moment of Elijah's life, he didn't know what would happen- but still, he turned to God and knew God would provide what Elijah truly needed. Then he went to sleep. At some point, Elijah knew he wasn't going to get much farther without taking care of himself first. We must do the same. However, first, we need to recognize that God will take care of us before we even realize we need to take care of ourselves. God will absolutely give us what we need, we just have to be vulnerable enough to listen to God, just like Elijah was. God continues to feed us, and continues to give us rest. We see examples of that care throughout the Bible.

In both the old and new testament, there are examples of God feeding and giving rest to God's people, but also taking time to rest for Godself. These stories give clear examples that God finds value in self-care, just like Elijah was seeking in our Old Testament scripture.

First, we hear about Jesus always taking time for himself in the wilderness. Luke 5: 15-16 says "**15** News of him spread even more and huge crowds gathered to listen and to be healed from their illnesses. **16** But Jesus would withdraw to deserted places for prayer." Matthew 14: 13 says, "**13** When Jesus heard about John, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. When the crowds learned this, they followed him on foot from the cities." Jesus always seems to be going into the wilderness on his own. Maybe there is a touch of Jesus being an introvert. And Jesus knew he would be provided for by his Creator. God continued to provide not only for Jesus but for the people Jesus was caring for.

In the story of Jesus feeding 5,000 people, Jesus specifically asks God to provide for the crowd and the people he is being called to care for. The disciples, in fact, are not having any of it. Our New Testament lesson, we hear that Jesus tried to provide the disciples with a place to go and rest on their own, just like Jesus tries to take time alone for himself, but the crowds follow them and Jesus teaches. So, now the disciples and Jesus haven't had time to take their quick afternoon nap for self-care, so what does Jesus do? Sends them all away when he realized they didn't have food, right? No. Jesus gives people a snack. And that snack was provided directly from God. Even after the disciples questioned that they would be able to complete the task that Jesus was asking of them.

The disciples didn't trust that God could provide a snack for these people in the field. But lo and behold, God does. God consistently provides what we need the rest and the nourishment that is required for us. We must continue to trust that God will provide those things just like God provided Elijah his nap and snack under the broom tree.

We must remember that it doesn't seem like anything has changed when Elijah goes on his way to Mount Horeb. In fact, God still meets Elijah there and questions what he is doing there, as he is hiding out in the cave at Mt. Horeb. Nothing has changed in God's plan for Elijah or what he is expected to do with Jezebel. God has not changed anything in Elijah's life except that he was allowed a nap and a snack for self-care and much-needed rest. We may not perceive something changing in our life, we may just be in a place that we need to take a moment for ourselves and trust that God will provide for us.

Please pray with me,

God,

You provide us with the rest and the nutrition that we need each and every day. We continued to be overwhelmed by your grace and your love when we are at our lowest point. God, help us to continue to see you at every moment of our lives. Help us remember to seek you in the moments when we feel the highest and the lowest. We ask that you remind us to care for ourselves just as you care for us. In your most awesome name, Amen.