

“I Give Up!?”—1 Kings 19:4-8

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “I Give Up!?”, is 1 Kings 19:4-8 → *Elijah went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.” And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.” And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. This is the text.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Starting is what stops many people. How many times have you the desire to accomplish something only to find yourself unable to move forward with your plans? It happens to people all the time. Fear of failure, feelings of inadequacy, “voices” from your past which cause you to doubt your abilities, fear in the face of rejection and a whole gamut of other dynamics can work to

stop you from starting a project or activity. Even if you can complete a project or activity from beginning to end, how many times does disappointment set in when things didn't turn out according to your expectations? Before starting again one can easily say, "I give up!"

In our text we find the prophet Elijah ready to "give up" in his service to the LORD, and this after having just experienced an amazing display of Yahweh's power! He had just finished his "dual" with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel where *the fire of the LORD fell and consumed his burnt offering along with the wood and the stones and the dust, and . . . the water that was in the trench.* It caused everyone who saw it to fall on their faces and say, "Yahweh, He is God." (cf. 1 Kings 18:38-39) After killing 450 prophets of Baal Queen Jezebel, the king of Israel's wife, was in hot pursuit to kill Elijah. I guess he had good reason to run for his life, huh?

Elijah, like many of God's people in the Old Testament, had encountered a lot of resistance as he tried to lead people to repentance and faith in the LORD. The root of every conflict, disobedience and rejection of God is sinful pride, through which satan gets a foothold leading people to reject God's Will **and** His blessings in their lives. It can make the person experiencing rejection while calling people to give up their sin in repentance feel like the only faithful person left. Elijah was experiencing his own sin in the form of self-

righteousness in the midst of his despair. Running for his life, he became very discouraged and was ready to give up, believing that he was the only believer left! He told Yahweh in 1 Kings 19:10 → *I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.*

How many times have you felt like Elijah? When your work, efforts and commitments for the LORD to help others be committed to the LORD do not bring about the desired results, you too can become discouraged and even despairing. When this happens you may be ready to give up and quit trying and even believe you're the only committed Christian left. What is the real problem here?

Our problem is that we are focused on ourselves and what **we** want to happen in our sinful self-dependence. Satan is working hard to get you to forget that it is the LORD Who has chosen you to bring His Will and Word to others. Somehow Elijah lost focus of what God had done in His awesome power on Mount Carmel, even to the point of despair. *He asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."* (verse 4) The devil wants you to forget that your service to the LORD is backed up with His awesome power and promises, such as Isaiah

41:10 → *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; **I will** strengthen you, **I will** help you, **I will** uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

Notice, God never gives up on us! He brings us to re-focus on our Savior, Jesus Christ, as we repent of our sins and receive His forgiveness, so that we depend upon His Holy Spirit to work through us to bring about His results in His way in His time! Elijah experienced God's strengthening power by being "touched by an angel" of God. According to verses 5-6 of our text *the angel of the LORD* fed him, after which Elijah *lay down again*. Notice God didn't give up on him! *And the angel of the LORD **came again a second time** and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.* (verses 7-8)

Notice God strengthened Elijah **for continued service!** In fact, Elijah was instructed to go back the way he came and continue His service with the LORD! Wait! Back there was Jezebel, the queen who wanted to kill him! Back there were all those people of God who rejected His message! Wouldn't it just be better if God strengthened Elijah so he felt better and could get on with a better quality of life?!

Because God is Lord over your service and with you in the midst of your service, things are not necessarily what they appear to be. In 1 Kings 19:18

Yahweh reassured Elijah that He had been at work amongst His people! He told Elijah: *Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.* (NIV84) There were others who were committed to Yahweh!! How could this be? It didn't look like there were other believers. It is testimony that the Holy Spirit is always working through the Word faithfully shared by His people! In Isaiah 55:10-11 God says: *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

So, what does God's Word accomplish? What is His purpose for you? To give up. To give up your sins, your self-righteousness, your idolatry, sinful pride and disobedience by repenting of your sins. To give it all up to Jesus Who took it's eternal punishment to the cross so you can be saved. This is what the LORD does in you as He "touches" you by Jesus Himself through His Word and Sacrament! Philippians 2:12-13 puts it this way: *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **for it is God Who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.***

When you "give up" your sins to Jesus and receive His forgiveness you will

be encouraged and strengthened by His Word to continue serving Him and watch Him perform His work and will! Even those endeavors which appear to be failures will belong to the LORD because you recognize that your ministry is not dependent upon your competence, as 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 says: *Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.* (NIV84) Thus, in the midst of your efforts, works, plans and activities recognize the Holy Spirit at work accomplishing **God's Will**. This is what we ask when we pray: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is submission in our desire for Him to produce His results, in His way and in His time! It is also our desire to simply be faithful in our service to Him by keeping Christ in clear focus.

Reassured that God is always at work through His Word and sacraments, and that He never gives up on us sinners, is very encouraging! It keeps you focused on Christ so that you continue serving Him, depending totally upon Him to bring about His results in the midst of your service to the glory of God!! Amen.

*Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable,
always abounding in the work of the Lord,
knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.* (1 Corinthians 15:58)