

Poor Elijah.

*Elijah went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."*

Elijah is in no better a situation than his forebears (the earlier prophets), because he-- like them-- is left with too much to bear on his own. He has done what he thought God wanted him to do, but the Queen, Jezebel, has dispatched soldiers to kill him. Elijah is discouraged. He's done what he's been asked. Why isn't everyone reacting like he's a hero? He feels like the scapegoat—and he's had enough.

I think we all can understand that. I'm sure at some point or other in our lives we've tried our best to do the right thing, only to have it all blow up in our faces. Or we thought we were walking down the road that was right for us and discover that there are roadblocks everywhere.

Then Elijah is touched by an angel. Now before we see that as a lovely thing--touched gently by this waifish lovely angel-- remember that angels in the bible were often huge, commanding and often a little terrifying.

The angel gives Elijah bread heated by hot coals, and water. Significantly, the words used in this passage for both the bread heated by coals and the jar of water to quench Elijah's thirst are used only one other time in the entire bible-- when the seraphs under God's direction give provisions of bread and water to the great prophet: Isaiah.

So they give Elijah a similar gift, but their words are brusque. "Get up and eat." In modern parlance: "Let it go Elijah-- eat and move on."

Elijah has work to do, people to serve, and can't let little -- and big-- setbacks make him give up.

Now this last Friday, August 6 was a holy day for of us in the liturgical traditions- like the Episcopal Church. We celebrated The feast of the Transfiguration.

Transfiguration, by its very nature, changes something from what it is, to something else. Jesus transfigured from an ordinary mortal to a being suffused with light: very different from our ordinary mortality.

Our transformations are similar: when we go through a transformation—and I've gone through several—we change.

Transformation is hard. Change is hard. Finding ourselves having to change, going from being something really comfortable – that we've lived with for a long time-- and changing into something we're not really sure of --- is uncomfortable.

It's easier to stay the same. Or, like Elijah, to refuse the change. To say it would be easier to die. Because sometimes changing can feel like death.

So we just sit. And wait. And why? Because we're waiting for a sign? Waiting for just the right time? Just can't face any more change?

You see, that's the thing about Transfiguration, transformations. That's the thing about angels. That's the thing about following Jesus. There is no right time. If we're waiting for that—we'll never start.

Then something will change us – or change our circumstances when we least expect it. No prep, no warning. And when it staggers us, that angel shows up. It may not have wings, so be alert to your own angels in your midst. And they often aren't soft and fluffy. And they can be unexpectedly blunt. Devastatingly blunt, even.

So that's one reason why we celebrate Transfiguration. Because sometimes, we'd rather *not* move. We'd rather pitch a tent, we'd rather just give up—but God won't let us.

Sometimes it's hard to keep going. When something happens to throw us off our feet, it's hard to get back up and keep going.

And that's when God brings us the bread of life.

We meet Jesus and receive our nourishment at the high table each Sunday for many reasons:

- We come in joy with thoughts of something new happening in our lives, or about to happen,
- we come with sorrow, grieving over something that is ending or changing,
- we come with discouragement over something we have done, or have not been able to do,
- we come with anger at someone or something—
- we come because we are weary, or wondering or wandering.

But we come.

And Jesus fills us with the bread of Life—the bread that makes our bodies strong, and fills our souls with love and insight. And Jesus says, get up and eat. Don't worry; I'll be with you, no matter what happens. I'll be with you always.

Amen.