

# The Tenth Sunday of Pentecost

August 9, 2009

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33

Psalm 130

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

John 6:35, 41-51

*In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

Elijah is not simply on a journey; Elijah is running for his life. He has just managed to offend the royalty and the religious establishment of Israel, and he is in great danger.

It's a good story. The king, who was not a very good king, had married Jezebel, who worshiped the Baal gods of the Canaanites; and, not being very religious himself, he had let those become the gods of Israel. Elijah, the great prophet of the Old Testament, challenged the priests of Baal to a contest which, of course, Jahweh won, and then killed all the priests. Jezebel, and therefore the king, found this quite unacceptable, and so Elijah fled south.

He's hot and tired and fearful. Perhaps he really thinks, "This is it; I can't go another step." Then he smells the most delicious aroma, fresh baked bread.

Have you ever walked into a real bakery that was filled with that smell of bread baking? It's not just an aroma; it is absolute comfort. It must have some subliminal meaning, call up some memory from long ago, perhaps a memory of childhood and warm kitchens and long, peaceful days. Warm, chewy, freshly baked bread with a crunchy crust just melts in your mouth.

The angel said to Elijah, “Hey, you have a long way to go and much to do, so get up and have some bread and get on with your journey.”

Every Tuesday morning we have a Eucharist at Langdale House. We meet in the activities room; we set up a table with a pair of candles in front of a counter of all the craft projects. Two weeks ago I was celebrating for a small group, and, as I elevated the Host, I smelled freshly baking bread. Of course there was a bread making machine on the counter behind me, a machine with incredibly good timing; whatever it did it was right on cue.

Jesus said, “I am the bread of life.” The bread of life means the promise of warmth and comfort and sustenance. If those associations come to us, think how they filled the minds of hungry, tired, frightened disciples. They too were running, just like Elijah had run, from the threats of royalty and the religious establishment. They, too, would find moments of rest and refreshment in the shade of the trees of gardens.

Jesus tells them that unlike the bread of this world, a bread that satisfies for the hour, the bread He offers satisfies forever; once eaten, it drives away discomfort and fear and promises eternal life.

You and I are about to eat that bread here at this altar. We can bring to this altar all the doubts and discomforts that all too often fill our days, and we can leave them here because we have His promise. We come to this altar to put down the burdens, the regrets and anxieties we carry; we go from this altar, back out into this world on the journey that is our daily life, carrying within us the presence of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Christ says to us, as the angel said to Elijah, “Get up and eat, or the journey may be too great for you.”

*In His Holy Name.*