

"The Journey Is Too Much For You!"

A family sat down to eat supper one evening. The father gave thanks for the food and the family was about to eat when Tina asked her father a question. "Daddy, why did you ask God to bless this food for our wobbly knees?" The father had said "bodily needs" in his prayer but Tina misunderstood and thought he said "wobbly knees." Even though the little girl misunderstood her father, she expressed a truth. We need food for our bodily needs but we even more importantly need to turn to God for strength when we face life's troubles.

Do you feel you're living quite often with "wobbly knees?" That's how Elijah felt, too! And he felt as if he couldn't continue. Our lesson today speaks to our lives, "When Going On Seems Impossible." "The Journey Is Too Much For You!" This is when your own weakness becomes clear and is not to be denied. But Christ invites you to look to him and he gives you the power to persevere.

Elijah was at the end of his rope. In a few hours, he had gone from a real "high" in his ministry to a real "low." Elijah had been a leading participant as the Lord demonstrated his power against the false prophets of Baal and the Lord finally had those false prophets – 450 of them – put to death. But this upset the queen, Jezebel, who supported those false prophets. Jezebel was outraged that this had happened. And she threatened Elijah, vowing that Elijah would die within a day because of what he had done.

This was no idle threat. Elijah felt the heat. He looked at his circumstances and we're told: "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life." He didn't just walk – he ran! In spite of the fact that the Lord had powerfully worked, the evil queen was alive and well and very capable of doing what she had vowed would happen. Elijah looked at himself and he had serious doubts as to whether he was going to make it. In fact, as he looked at himself, he knew that he couldn't.

It's sad that a powerful prophet of God would feel that way. Was Elijah wrong in feeling this way? Actually, Elijah had every reason to feel this way. On his own, he wasn't going to make it! And the same could be said for us. In fact, if God is to do his great work in us, we also must reach this same point. It's not a question of "if" you are going to make it on your own. You can't. You may struggle hard to keep on going in this life, you may try and juggle the stresses of family life and career pursuit. It's a struggle at times just to make a living and you may be doing quite well now in your struggle. But finally, all your struggling and striving won't get you into heaven. Finally, we must all stand before the Lord and admit that, on our own, we can't make it to the life that is his alone to give.

Realize that God could have done away with the evil queen right away and taken away Elijah's fears. But he didn't do that right away because he had Elijah's best interests in mind. Don't get mad at the Lord but in his love and grace he is at work in your life to bring you to this same point! It's not really a question of if you're going to reach this point – the most important question really is "when?" When will you realize how helpless you really are? God knows you can't make it on your own! The angel even said to Elijah: "The journey is too much for you!"

Yes, my friend, the journey is too much for you, too, to make on your own. Kids have boundless energy but, the older we get, the more we realize we can't do what we once did. In his own way, the Lord wants to lead you to the point where you clearly see you're not going to make it on your own. A mother all of a sudden snaps in frustration because she's just changed the 1500<sup>th</sup> diaper of her life as mother and she doesn't think she can change diaper 1501. Family tension builds to the point where you feel you can't continue. These are days when many worry

about their future and many have seen well-designed hopes and plans go up in smoke. We may even suffer as we try to do what's right. Think of why Elijah was suffering. We may not have an evil queen threatening us but in a subtle way, a friend lets us know that if we continue with this "religion thing," we're going too far.

I heard recently about a church choir director who was trying to get a choir to learn a difficult musical number. Numerous practices were held but nothing seemed to be helping. The choir wasn't getting it. The choir finally performed the number in church and, afterward, one of the choir members snapped at the director. "We should have practiced more for this program so we could have done it right," she said. The choir director was devastated. She had tried, to the best of her ability, to do what was right. But now she was in tears.

It's at this very point that we so often fall! All it takes sometimes is a few words, some cruel or insensitive thing some unthinking person says. Look at your own life, right now, and you may see every reason in the world for not continuing. "I just can't anymore" – you're not the only one who's ever said that. And that's the point! From a human standpoint, left to ourselves, left to struggle with our own energy and power, we're not going to make it! But what we so often do is just focus on that and stop. We look at all the reasons for giving up but we fail to see the greatest reason for continuing!

The Gospel's powerful point is this: it's not a question of if you're going to make it! You are going to make it! In fact, you have it already made because you have a Savior who has made it for you! It's not a question of if – look to your Savior God for the strength and power for life. He will keep you going!

He gave Elijah what he needed. We're told that the "angel of the Lord" visited Elijah. Old Testament Scripture makes it pretty clear that this is the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God. He gave Elijah what he needed to keep going on. He had Elijah eat – and had him eat again. We're told: "Strengthened by that food, he traveled 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God." The emphasis is on the fact that Elijah could continue because of what God had given him – "that food." Yes, it was a miracle. Imagine trying to hike to the Mackinac Bridge from here on the power that one night's supper gives you! No meal – however hearty – is able to do that. But God was giving him the strength to keep on going. It was because God was behind the food Elijah ate that Elijah was able to travel that far.

The Lord gives you the strength to continue on "when going on seems impossible." Jesus gave his life to win back yours. He said, "This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world." Jesus gave his life for your life. You now have life in him. Jesus gives you life that is eternal. Again the Savior said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever." You will live forever as you look for life to Christ and feed on him by faith. Feed by faith on Christ. He is your life. God's Word is your strength – God brings you to faith and keeps you in faith! Look at today's Gospel Lesson and how Jesus points to the power of the Word, the ability of God's Word to do all things, seemingly impossible – even raising the dead!

And he is your strength. As you live in Christ, Christ lives in you. Realize that you are then living with a source of life and strength that will never fail you! That's why the apostle wrote: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Also: "when I am weak, then I am strong." When you are weak, when you feel helpless, when you feel as if going on is simply impossible, that's when the Lord would have you realize your real strength – it's Christ living in you! It's because of him that you can keep on going.

Keep on going – and keep on going for him! God had work for Elijah to do. Elijah's time on earth wasn't yet over and God was trying to help him to see that his time would be over only

when God said his work was done! The same can be said about you as you look to Christ for what you need. He has work for you to do. And he will give you the strength to do it! You may feel that it's no use, that perhaps you're useless, that your back is against the wall. But he's giving you strength to keep on going. There's still that individual who needs to see Christ's power at work in you, that child who needs to hear about Christ from you, that friend who needs to be shown that there's a reason for continuing – and his name is Christ!

There are some Christians who never realize what a great example they've been for others, examples of patience, of perseverance, of politeness even when picked on (they don't realize it because no one's probably taken the time to tell them!)

It has been said that the best inscription that can be placed on a mountain climber's grave is the inscription: "He died climbing." Climb some mountains in Europe and you will indeed find that kind of marker on the trails leading up to the tops of some mountains. For a Christian, the inscription could be: He kept on going. He kept on going because Christ gave him the strength to keep on going. It's not a matter of "if" you're going to make it! Put him to the test on this. You will not be disappointed.

The journey's too much for you – but, with God alongside, you will never fail!