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## **Take a Nap – Grab a Snack**

**By The Rev. Sam Sheridan**

Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence (1 Kings 19:11b-12).

I have heard this story of Elijah all my life. This phrase “sheer silence” as translated in our New Revised Standard Version is the “still small voice” from the King James Version. It’s how we’re taught to expect not great and wondrous signs, but quiet, gentle dignity from God – or perhaps to see the wondrous miracles in the very ordinary turning of the earth. Either way, it is a beautiful image that has inspired songs, poems, paintings, Hallmark cards, and virtually unlimited Education for Ministry Facebook posts over the years.

Elijah’s life is full of many such extraordinary things – so many things to pique the imagination of artists all over the world, across centuries. He

raises the widow's son from the dead at Zarephath. He summons fire from the sky as he sacrifices to Almighty God before the 450 prophets of Baal. He leaves the earth, not by dying himself, but taken up into the heavens on a chariot of fire!

He leads such an extraordinary life that it's easy to forget he's actually pretty relatable. There is a point, in the middle of all these stories, when Elijah is so exhausted, so overwhelmed, so anxious that he totally loses all hope – which is not how all of us feel all the time, but it is certainly how all of us have felt *sometimes*.

After Elijah upstages the followers of Baal, Jezebel flies into a rage and orders Elijah's execution. He begins to be hunted, and flees for his life into the wilderness. He collapses under a broom tree (which Encyclopedia Britannica assures me is a kind of scruffy shrub) and pleads with God that he might die, "O Lord, take away my life," (1 Kings 19:4b).

Elijah is then awakened by an angel who invites him to eat a hot cake, go back to sleep, eat another hot cake, and then get on with his day.

So many extraordinary things happened before that, and yet Elijah fell into despondency. Even the best of us, the most successful, the most determined and dedicated among us will not be winning every day.

So many extraordinary things happened after that, and not one of them would have happened if Elijah hadn't taken a little time to nap and snack. No matter what has or hasn't already been accomplished, no one can do very much good if we're starving or exhausted.

Elijah is relatable. We're human beings. We have limitations. We have bodies to feed and rest. We have houses to clean, yards or gardens to maintain, children to worry about, parents who won't stop worrying.

All of the stuff in our lives would be quite enough to exasperate anyone even before we turn on the news and see a world of international and domestic politics and COVID-19 responses going ... well, I'll say it doesn't seem to be going all that well, just generally, on this planet. We're messy, broken, sinful, and weak, and we all live in a culture where it's perfectly acceptable to

pretend everything's fine all the time – even though it's not actually fine all the time.

But scripture shows us that even a life of miracles and wonder is going to have limitations. You have to pause sometimes. You have to refuel sometimes. Come on down to the river, sit under the shade of even a weird shrub – if that's what's available – and grab yourself a snack, get a little nap ... Take care of yourself. As the angel says, "Otherwise the journey will be too much for you" (1 Kings 19:7b).