

## **Bread in the Wilderness**

### **1 Kings 19:1-8**

So, how many of you have been watching SGN?

What's that, you say?

SGN - it stands for Some Good News,

and it's a news show not like any other news show —

it's a half-hour, or thereabouts, of only good news.

Actor John Krasinski came up with the idea in March,

right after we all entered this new reality —

and every week, from his living room, he hosts a show full of — some good news.

And it's not that he does a half-hour of cat videos to distract us from what's awful out there.

He jumps into what's bad and finds the good.

Like his story about the 98-year old British war veteran who decided to walk 100 laps of his back yard to raise money for a local hospital — and raised 30 million pounds.

That was an SGN story.

Or the dad who went into his backyard and created a ski slope complete with a hand-cranked chair lift to keep his kids entertained.

Also an SGN story.

A couple of weeks ago, Some Good News was focused on food.

I don't mean variation number 49 on the chocolate chip cookies we're all making too many of.

*Some Good News* was focused, specifically, on the good people out there who are making sure others have food.

The restaurant owners who are using their kitchens to cook for others.

The people who are working the food pantries.

And SGN highlighted the compassionate work of Chef Jose Andres, and his World Central Kitchen non-profit.

World Central Kitchen has engaged thousands of volunteers to cook and deliver meals to those around us who are starving, they served three million meals just last week, it's amazing.

And I watched as Some Good News showed a video of one of those volunteers delivering food.

It was a young woman, carrying a boxed meal across a deserted sidewalk to where a homeless man lay curled up in the entryway to an office building. She bent down, spoke kindly to him, and carefully placed her box of food beside him. Food where it was needed. Some Good News.

And watching that young woman so tenderly carrying a meal to that man, who looked so alone, I thought of this story, the story that we've just shared with you from scripture. It's a story of food given where it was needed, when it was needed. It's a story of someone receiving some Good News.

The story is of the prophet Elijah, alone in the wilderness. Elijah, for whom everything *had* been going right, and now wasn't. Here's a little back story: Elijah had been a great and mighty prophet of God, renowned, beloved, esteemed. He was a favorite of the King, who was a faithful follower of God. Elijah wasn't, however, so much a favorite of the Queen, a not very nice woman named Jezebel. And, long story short, Jezebel turns the King against Elijah, and Elijah, the popular and revered prophet Elijah, ends up having to run for his life from one very angry King and Queen.

And he ends up running into the wilderness, to God knows where.  
And out there in the wilderness, Elijah runs out of everything.  
He runs out of food, yes, but he also runs out of hope.  
He'd done everything right, he thought,  
but now nothing's *going* right.  
And he's done. He's just -- done.  
And the story says that he collapses under a broom tree,  
and he says to God "it's enough."  
And, exhausted, he falls asleep.

What happens next is what makes this one of the most important stories in the Bible.  
God brings Elijah bread.  
God brings bread. Bread for the journey.

There's a little tap on Elijah's shoulder, and he opens his eyes and looks,  
and there's an angel, it says,  
an angel who says "Get up and eat, Elijah."  
And there, right beside him, is bread and water.  
And eats, and he sleeps some more, and then it happens again:  
there's the touch of an angel,  
there's bread beside him, and Elijah hears God's voice saying  
"Get up and eat, Elijah, or this journey will be too much for you."

When he is at his lowest, when Elijah doesn't want to go on anymore,  
when it's all too much -- that's when God shows up.  
That's when God shows up in the wilderness,  
and says: here's bread for the journey.  
Take, and eat.  
God comes to Elijah in the toughest moment of his life  
and says "here you go. Here's what you need to get yourself going again."

This is a story we surely need to hear right now.  
Because, oh my goodness, we are in some kind of wilderness here, aren't we?

This is an unknown place in which we find ourselves.  
An unknown and confusing place,  
where nothing seems knowable, and nothing seems sure.

What lies ahead?

When will we be done with this?

Will we be done with this?

When can I see people I love again?

This is a strange, unknown place to be, this particular wilderness.

And into this place, this unknown wilderness, comes a God who says

"I'm here -- and look, I baked for you!

Here's bread for the journey.

I'm going to get you through this.

We're going to get through this."

This is our God.

The God who shows up in the wildernesses  
and gives us everything we need for the journey.

Our God doesn't ever leave us to figure it on our own.

Our God shows up.

and offers us the bread of life,

holy manna, hope, and courage, patience and faith.

So for all of us who are feeling Elijah-like.

A little lonely and forlorn in a strange place.

A little frightened and uncertain.

This story is for us.

This story that says we are not every alone.

And we need never be frightened or forlorn.  
Because right beside us is fresh-baked bread for the journey.  
All that we need to get up and keep going.

How does Elijah's story end?

The scripture says that Elijah gets up from his meal of God-given bread, and moves on.

In the strength of that food, the story says, he journeys on out of the wilderness and up to the mountaintop, where God whispers to him in a still small voice and reminds him of who he's called to be and the life he's called to live.

And he goes and begins to live it again.

So it will be for us. So it is for us.

I'll close with just a little story from the other day.

You know, I think, that our Sanctuary is open every day, from early in the morning, till well into the evening.

And throughout the day, people come in, alone usually, sometimes with family.

People are grateful for the chance to be in a place of holiness and peace and quiet.

People are also grateful for the cookies that are often in the Narthex, lovingly baked and bagged up by a wonderful volunteer in our church.

One day this week I happened to be up there in the balcony when a father and his young daughter came in together.

They stood at the front of the church, in front of the candlestand that's always here.

"Daddy, what are we doing?" I heard the little girl say.

"I need to say some prayers," said her dad. "You can say them with me."

So he led her, word by word, through the prayers,

as he spoke aloud to God  
and asked God to be with all the people they loved,  
and to give strength to everyone.

After they had finished praying, there was a pause.

And I heard a little voice say, “*Now* can I have a cookie, Daddy?”

And I thought - how perfect.

For a sweet little girl, church was where some unknown angel had baked a cookie for her.

For her dad, church was where strength could be found for the journey.

Just like Elijah, opening his eyes in the wilderness  
to see that God-baked bread beside him  
and finding strength for the journey.

For us, too, in this strange place we find ourselves --

there is the touch of an angel on our shoulder,

and a voice that whispers “get up and eat” --

there is bread for the journey and One who will show us the way.

Onward.

Amen.