

Week 2 — You Have Found Favor: Messengers of Mercy

Core Reading: 1 Kings 19:1–8 — Elijah fed by the angel

Optional Readings: Genesis 21:8-20; Luke 1:46–55; Psalm 34:4–10

Reflection

Elijah is not at his best when we meet him in 1 Kings 19. He is tired, frightened, discouraged. After a dramatic victory on Mount Carmel, he finds himself running for his life, collapsing under a broom tree, and asking God to let him die. “It is enough,” he says. “Now, O Lord, take away my life.”

There is something profoundly human about that moment. After trying hard to faithfully do the right thing, Elijah discovers he has nothing left. He is completely worn out, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

And what does God send? Not a lecture. Not a new assignment. Not correction. But God sends an angel, who touches him and says, “Get up and eat.”

Bread. Water. Rest. The mercy of God, in this story, is deeply practical. Elijah is allowed to sleep. He is fed again. Only then, when he is somewhat revived, is he told that the journey ahead will be long.

It is striking that the angel does not argue with Elijah’s despair. His honesty is not rebuked at all. Instead, God’s mercy restores him before he is once again given purpose.

Hagar’s story in Genesis carries a similar tenderness. She has been cast out of her home and is wandering in the wilderness. Certain that she and her son will die of thirst, she breaks down and weeps. Then the angel of God calls out to her and says, “Do not be afraid.” Her eyes are opened and she sees a well of water. Her response is a unique act in the bible - she names God ‘El Roi’, meaning “the One who sees me”. Even in her abandonment, she is not unseen or unheeded by her Creator God.

For ourselves, there are times in our lives when we feel strong and purposeful, and there are times when we feel like Elijah under the tree - worn out, discouraged, and unsure how to continue. The season of Lent does not ask us to pretend that we are stronger than we are. Instead it invites honesty about our limits, and encourages us to reach out to God with our vulnerable, hungry, thirsty, selves. For God sees us as we are.

Sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is receive. But that can be surprisingly difficult. We are often more comfortable with giving than accepting care. We might feel like we should cope on our own, or that others have greater needs which should be prioritised.

Yet today we find that God's mercy arrives before renewed calling, before clarity, before change. First, God gives sustenance.

Elijah still has a journey ahead. Hagar still has a wilderness to cross. Mercy does not remove the path before us, but it makes walking it possible.

Perhaps part of our Lenten work is to notice where we are weary, and to ask where God might already be offering bread, water, rest, or companionship. Sometimes grace is not dramatic. Sometimes it is quiet. Ordinary. Enough for today.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What part of Elijah's story most resonates with you?**
- 2. Why can it be difficult to receive care when we are struggling?**
- 3. Where might you need rest, nourishment, or encouragement in this season?**
- 4. If you were to name God based on your season of life right now, what name might you give?**
- 5. What small signs of mercy have you noticed recently, for yourself or others?**

Closing Prayer

God of mercy,

When we are weary or discouraged, meet us with gentleness.

Feed us with what we need for today.

Help us to receive your care without shame,

and trust that your mercy is enough for the road ahead.

Amen.