

West Valley Presbyterian Church  
Cupertino, CA  
Christy Pierce, Sermon  
Help God! I'm Tired!  
Sunday, July 7, 2013

**Purpose:** To encourage tired people to find rest in God's Presence this summer and to give practical ways to do that.

**Scripture:** 1 Kings, Chapter 19: Story of Elijah

Introduction:

Story of heat this week. Man! When you get this hot, you understand just why people in the South, before air conditioning, used to just sit on their porches in the afternoon, drinking sweet tea and fanning themselves.

There is something about the heat that zaps every bit of energy you have. And leaves you tired, worn out.

Now, that kind of tired is one thing. The enemy is the heat. It will pass.

But what about the kind of tired that's deeper?  
The tired that stays with us day after day?  
That can keep us from having joy?

We all get tired sometimes. We can even feel pretty good some days – feeling like things are going well, we can do big things....

And then, tiredness can wave over us like a wet blanket. Zapping all our strength and making us lose passion & energy to go on with the day to day stuff of life.....

That's the kind of tired I want to talk about THIS MORNING.

To do that, going to look at one of my favorite Bible stories about a hero of the faith who became very tired. Wanting even to give up.

The story is from 1 Kings, the story of Elijah. Often, when I teach from this passage it's during my whispers conferences. Lots of meat here about how God whispers....

But tonight, want to look at it from a slightly different angle....

About how God meets tired people, and what we can learn about God's answer for us when we get weary....

READ PASSAGE:

### *Elijah Flees to Horeb*

**19** Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup>So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

<sup>3</sup>Elijah was afraid<sup>a</sup> and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup>while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." <sup>6</sup>He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

<sup>7</sup>The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." <sup>8</sup>So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>9</sup>There he went into a cave and spent the night.

### *The Lord Appears to Elijah*

And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

<sup>10</sup>He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to

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<sup>a</sup> Or *Elijah saw*

death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

<sup>11</sup> The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

<sup>14</sup> He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

<sup>15</sup> The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. <sup>16</sup> Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. <sup>17</sup> Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. <sup>18</sup> Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.”

Now, the setting for this passage is critical. If you don't know this story – we need to rewind just a bit so you get just why Elijah is running for his life....

Right before this:

Wonderful Story. Elijah, burned out. Fought Baals. Weary, tired. No faith anymore. Just wants to die.

Here's Elijah –

Done this heroic thing – stood up to all the prophets of Baal

Some not so good odds shall we say...

1 guy – Elijah vs. 400 of the big bad guys....

And he taunts them to call upon their gods to bring down fire....

They dance and cry out to God all day. Striking themselves with whips...

Picture this:

These 400 men dancing, shouting, blood flying around from their whipping themselves....

Elijah LAUGHING at them...

Taunting them...

Call louder, maybe your God is deaf? Maybe He is sleeping!

And then, in that amazing moment –

He ends it all....

Calls down fire from heaven from the REAL GOD, our God...

Sends the fire...

And then Elijah calls the people to kill these false prophets once and for all.

Man, Elijah seems to be to be sort of the Rambo of the Old Testament.

I'm in awe of this brave act of taking these guys on...

Having this HUGE faith that His God will show up and prove Him right.

And at his STRONG belief in the promise God gave him

But here comes the funny part.

After winning this huge battle, Elijah has a bit of a melt down.

Threatened by a woman – Jezebel. Granted she threatens to kill him – but so did the others! And he runs terrified into the desert.

And he tells the Lord, “I have had enough, Lord, take my life. I am no better than my ancestors.” Then he goes to sleep.

And I love this: the tenderness of God – The Lord doesn't look down on Elijah. Doesn't berate him for his little faith. Instead, God sends an angel to take care of him in his exhaustion, his burn-out – with food, sleep, and takes him to a place of safety – Mt. Horeb, where he can heal, recover – and hear God speaking again.

And God DOES speak to him again and he says,  
“Elijah, what are you doing here?”  
And then after that He speaks to him.....  
Listen to how God SPEAKS....

Verse 11-12 – READ

Verse 12: “And after the fire, came a gentle whisper – and it was here, *in the gentle whisper*, that the Lord spoke to Elijah.”

And told him what to do.

### What Can We Learn From Elijah?

- 1) *Even the strongest, most faith-filled people get tired.*

Probably the most encouraging thing to me about this story is that Elijah was human. He had days where he felt full of faith, and days where he felt faithless. He had strong days, and weak days. He had days he thought he could take on the world – and did! And days he wanted to give up.

Really, really encourages me.

The Bible says, “Elijah was a man just like us”

We don’t have to be super-heros for God all the time.  
It’s OK to get tired.

- 2) *Sometimes, God prescribes eating, sleeping and resting...before we can hear anything from Him.*

Before God says a word to Elijah, he first sends the angel – to give him food, to help him sleep, to exercise – with that long walk from the desert to Mt. Horeb. He needed to take care of his physical exhaustion before his burnout could be healed and he could actually hear God’s voice again.

3) *We can become internally tired, and loose vision & perspective.*

I call this a tiredness of the soul.

It's interesting, the bible scholars who've soaked in this passage point out that Elijah's melt down, depression, EXTREME TIREDNESS of the soul....

Was not just because of the BATTLE he fought....

But it's because of an internal tired...

When we become tired on the inside, we often loose perspective...  
We don't see clearly anymore

We loose sight of what God is doing and where He is...

You see, Elijah felt that he was all alone.  
That there was NO ONE left to help him....  
It wasn't just fear of Jezebel –  
But a profound burn out and exhaustion that, in effect,

BLURRED his vision so that he couldn't see the situation clearly....

All he could see was his  
Fatigue  
A hopeless situation with no one with faith in the land

Exhaustion and Burn Out can do that to you....  
You can get so tired and worn out....  
That everything looks bad.  
You loose sight of where God is and you can loose perspective....

STORY:

WDC. Afraid to move. Tricked by God.  
But I did it. Little faith, but drove across the country in a little car, very little money, on faith.  
I made it...but I

Arrived exhausted.

Someone who struggles with depression anyway...

Woke up the next morning, opened up the curtains to Pasadena....

I hate palm trees!

Why am I here God?

Why did you bring me here?

Couldn't see the tender hand of God moving me across the country. To be equipped for ministry. To meet Ben. To change the whole path of my life so that I could have a joy and purpose and relationship that would forever change my life for good....

All I saw was the Palm Trees

We can also lose sight of HOW BIG GOD IS and how small our problems really are in HIS HANDS....

Lots of debate as to what the earthquake, the fire, the thunder were all about in this passage among the scholars....

But my personal opinion is that it was GOD showing Elijah how BIG He really is. If GOD can make the earthquake, the thunder boom, the fire burn....

Then, surely, he can take care of a little thing like Jezebel.

And ALSO to show us that when we are looking for GOD in the BIG THINGS...

We may just miss the little things that God is doing right in front of us.

As we say in our whispers conferences....

Most of the time, God doesn't speak in a loud voice – in thunder or lightning – but in a quiet whisper....

To hear Him, we need to get quiet. To remember how BIG He is compared to our problems. To let him take care of us – to feed us, to rest us, to minister His loving Presence TO US...

Before we can hear again.

Back to Elijah.

Something new I never noticed before –

When Elijah gets into the desert and falls down.

Take my life Lord, I'm no better than my ancestors moment....

There is no evidence that he thought he'd ever get up again.

It's an almost suicidal moment.

In the desert, no food, done with everything, calling out to God to take his life....

Profound tiredness of the soul can do that to you.

- 4) *Profound tiredness can become dangerous if we don't address it, and even make people become depressed or want to give up.*

***Now, tired can come in different shapes and sizes....***

I don't need to tell you that people in our culture are TIRED.

TIRED is an epidemic

But to be concrete –

Let me focus us a bit on the reality of the problem for OUR CULTURE today...which arguably is worse than in our parent's generation....

There is this GREAT book called Crazy Busy – encourage you to get a copy. By a MD who is an expert on ADD. Claims our driven culture is causing many of us to have symptoms of ADD who aren't even ADD at all. It won the Best Motivational Book of the Year Award in 2007....

Just a quick soundbite about the book hi-lights this “tired problem” facing many of us in this culture:

*“Blackberries, cellphones, and email 24/7, rushed meeting and endless carpools to the kids' soccer games, hurried mealtimes and longer workdays. Being crazybusy saps us of creativity, humanity, and mental well being.” Crazy Busy, by Edward M. Hallowell, MD.*

Here are some statistics to restate the problem of tired

1/3 of Americans are chronically overworked



Doctors estimate the annual cost of illnesses related to stress and overwork in US – 300 Billion a year.

Bay Area often requires 2 incomes

Sundays are often as busy as other days – problem of finding Sabbath of any kind harder...

**Our kids are tired – ADD STORY ABOUT ANNIE AND BENJI!**

The Hurried Child?

Now, there are different levels of tired.

Take a look at what I call the Tired Continuum:

Picture a Tired Continuum....

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10-  
Had a bad night's                      Weary              Soul Tired      Chronic              Want to give up  
Sleep (physical)                      (day to              lost passion      fatigue              Suicidal  
Day tired)                      and joy              Burn Out

-----Clinical Depression-----

My own story –

Honestly, the worst person and the best person to preach this sermon. I believe I've been tired most of my life. At different times, with the exception of 10, I've been at various levels on that scale...

Probably camped out much of the time at a 4 or 5 or 6.

I'm not sure where you'd place yourself on that continuum, but I can tell you that wherever you are...

I understand.

Being tired isn't fun.

It's hard.

And yet, some really good news for tired people....

So I want to end our time by offering some hope and possible direction for those of us who are tired and want God's relief:

Help For Tired People:

1) *If you are tired, you're not alone.*

- Very basic. Very simple. But I think it helps to remind ourselves that we're not crazy or weak if we are tired. Elijah, the Rambo hero, got tired. Yeah, but he did the big battle thing! Yes, BUT – the Bible says, he was a human. It's OK for you to be too. And like the statistics pointed out, everyone gets tired sometimes. So, do NOT beat yourself up if you are tired – like you're doing life wrong – give yourself grace. And work with Jesus to find some ways to restore your soul. What might that be?

2) *SMART tired people don't try to be lone rangers*

What do I mean by that?

Over the years, in my own life – and as I've ministered and counseled lots of tired people...

I've found this truth.

Wherever you are on the tired scale, you most likely won't get better without getting help.

I think one of the most encouraging things God did for Elijah was let him vent.

What are you doing here Elijah?

Vents.

Don't you think God knew that??

But he hears him out.

Lets him talk about it.

Very healing for Elijah.

Then quietly reminds Elijah that HE IS GOD, and Elijah is not. He puts Elijah's problems in perspective. Then reminds him he's not alone.

### God's 4 Step Plan For Elijah's Burn Out

- Food, rest, sleep
- Venting & talking it out with someone who loved Him (God!)
- God showing Him fresh vision from HIS perspective
- After all this: Elijah recovers and moves into the next call of God.

Very interesting...

Good steps for us, really.

We need to take care of our physical exhaustion.

We need someone to talk to (counselor, prayer team, small group)

Then the most important thing of all –

We need to get quiet before God – and SEEK HIM and HIS VIEW OF THE SITUATION....

One of the most powerful prayers you can pray:

“Lord, give me eyes to see the situation like you see it.”

Christy – turtle story – laugh! Still praying about what slow down means, but I know God will show me. He got me back on track.

3) *Find your own “Mt. Horeb” this summer and get there no matter what.*

- It's July 7. We are half way through summer. Summertime is supposed to be a time of “rest” – at least psychologically from our school days – though it rarely is today. I want to encourage you strongly...to find a Mt. Horeb this summer and get some rest. Now, I'm not saying you should run out of here shrieking into the desert – though some of you may WISH I was giving us all permission to do that....

But I want to urge you to find a very specific time, a very specific place, where you can escape to this summer...

What might that look like for you?

What restores your soul? Is it the beach? Is it the mountains? Is it a quiet place like Filoli down the street walking in the gardens?

Do you need to be with people?  
Do you need to be alone?

Think about it!

But go on a Mt. Horeb Field Trip with Jesus.

Take your Bible. Take your Journal.

*But Rest.* Get quiet. Pray and Ask God to whisper to you there.

***Jesus loves tired people & longs to replace our tiredness with His strength instead.***

***This morning, came across this passage:***

***“Look to the Lord and His strength, seek His face always.”***

***So, often friends – the root of our tiredness is that we look to ourselves and not to Him. So often, we are tired because we are trying to carry it all on our own shoulders...and He is waiting with open arms to hold us, to take off our shoulders the heavy loads, and to replace it with His peace and strength to face things in life.***

***Jesus said,***

***“Come to me all of you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Rest for your souls. Take my yoke and learn from me, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”***

Jesus loves tired people. THIS MORNING, as you come to Him, he wants to take the heavy loads off your shoulders, and carry it for you.

To walk alongside you as you leave tonight and keep carrying that heavy load...so that tomorrow, instead of tired – you know His Strength, His Presence, His Peace.

In just a minute, we are going to have a time of resting in God’s Presence and taking communion together.

Want to remind you a few things:

Here at West Valley Pres,

You don't have to be a member here to take communion – you are all welcome to this table who believe in Jesus or want to for the first time this morning...

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMUNION....

Take a piece of bread, juice....

When the music plays –

You can come forward at any time, receive communion....

Options –

Return to your seat. Quiet prayer as music plays...

Or prayer teams (YES OR NO?)

I'll be up here along with others. Safe place to come and receive prayer for any need...

Invite Communion Servers and Prayer Teams to come forward first

There is no better place for tired people to come than to this table. For at this table we remember that Jesus died for us, once and for all, so that we might be forgiven for our sins. At this time, we find rest. We find peace knowing that He who did that for us, is fully able to carry any heavy loads making us tired right now....

#### PRAYER

On the night of His arrest, Jesus took bread, and gave thanks....

#### COMMUNION