

# “It is NOT Enough”

August 8, 2021  
Online Worship Service  
York United Ministries  
Recorded at New Hope United Church  
Rev. Andrew K. Lee

## **Prayer for Illumination**

God of daybreak, our souls wait for your light more than those who watch for the morning. Let your Holy Spirit illumine our hearts with the light of your redemption, a new day, a new life in Christ. **Amen.**

## **Scripture Reading**

### **1 Kings 19:1-7**

**The great prophet Elijah flees from Jezebel and wants to die under a solitary broom tree.**

<sup>1</sup> Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” <sup>3</sup> Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. <sup>4</sup> But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: “It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.” <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.” <sup>6</sup> He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD came a second time, touched him, and said, “Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.”

This is the Words of God.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## <Children's Time>

Hello my friends! How is your summer so far?

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C      Dm   C                      Dm  
 "Bees'll buzz, kids'll blow dandelion fuzz

C                                      Dm           G      C      Dm      Dm7   G(!)

And I'll be doing whatever snow does in summer

C                      Dm      C                                      Dm

A drink, in my hand, my snow up against the burning sand

C                      Dm           G              C

Prob'ly getting gorgeously tanned in summer"

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Your skin must be getting darker, right? I hope you are enjoying the beautiful weather and reducing your screen time, except for this online worship service and the continually updating YAYA YTB Q-BOX SERIES video clips for your information and education.

You know, the Bible has a lot of stories and teachings about God and God's people. And they communicated through both verbal and non-verbal ways. What is your communication skill with God? You do not communicate with God? No way! Communication is essential to build a relationship between the two. And building a relationship with God is the key to Christian life. We communicate with God. We definitely do. And the most well-known communication skill is "prayer." We usually pray to God when we eat, sleep, and at the time of important life events or exams. And does God listen to your prayer? Yes? No? You don't know if God has ears to listen? Oh dear. God listens to your prayer, although even I am not sure God has ears like mines. And at the same time, paradoxically speaking, God sometimes doesn't allow what you pray. In other words, God is not your magic wand or the genie of the lamp that gives you superpowers. How do I know? Let's



take a look at this old person: his name is Elijah, and he is the second famous great prophet in the Old Testament. Whatever he prays comes true. But one day, he prayed desperately. His prayer was to take his life away. He prayed with all his heart. It was a really serious prayer. And did God listen to his prayer? God definitely heard what he said, but God didn't allow what he prayed. And God showed him another way instead of taking away his life. My friends, even the man of faith failed in his prayer, because his prayer is not of God's good will but of on his own behalf, which is against God.

Therefore, my friends, two things we need to remember. No.1. We must communicate with God through our prayer, and no. 2. God allows us what we pray when our prayer is of God's plan.

I hope you found how to communicate with God through your sincere prayers before the end of this summer. And I also hope that your prayers meet God's plan towards you. God bless you, my friends!

### **<Reflection>**

Good morning! Today we resume the worship service after our summer closure. I hope you had a good time of vacation in July. And as Thom said, we will offer online worship video with a minimized quality for those who are not at the sanctuary. In this summer the situation is still changing, but so far, fortunately, we Ontarians spent a safer summer while we have isolated times. In the Bible today, I brought the story of isolation, but before jumping into the passage, I'd like to share my experience of spiritual direction when I was in Regis College, a Jesuit Institute at the University of Toronto. Spiritual direction sessions for the students of Regis College were strongly recommended, meaning, I needed to do it anyways. It happens with a student as a directee and an appointed qualified spiritual director. I pursued a spiritual director at the moment, so spiritual direction was important to me.

Usually, a directee prepares to share their spiritual life or concerns in ordinary life, then a director tries to find divine guidance through the directee's life. Likewise, I usually prepared what I wanted to share. But one day, I was so exhausted. My brain was bland and had nothing to share, so I decided to share how difficult my situation was: I had lots of issues in my life and study as a foreign student. I was really ready to listen to his advice and to do what he taught. After listening to my concerns for half an hour, my spiritual director, who was an old man, started moving his lips.

"Andrew. Now go home. Eat well. And sleep tight." I was confused and somewhat annoyed by what he said. His advice was so irrelevant and random. It was not a divine teaching at all. It was just a farewell notion of a grandmother. I was supposed to pay some amount of money for the direction, so that also escalated my disappointment. In spite of my ridiculous feeling, I decided to do what he directed anyway. I went home, ate something, and went to bed early. When I woke up, nothing had been changed. My bad situation was still the same, and I was still behind my studies. But one thing, a very important thing, had been changed. I started positively planning the next steps for study and life.

Can we say a similar thing happened to Elijah today? Elijah has cake and water and sleeps under a broom tree. And after this, he resumed his ministry again. Of course, the experience of Elijah must have been much more intense: He had to fight against King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel. He prayed to God, and fire from heaven burnt the offering on Mt. Carmel. He slaughtered 450 priests of Baal. Right after this dramatic, bloody, and triumphant victory, he had to run away from the persecution of Jezebel because she sent a messenger to tell Elijah that she would kill him in 24 hours. Elijah freaked out because he was to be killed in a day. So he left Jezreel to Beersheba and then proceeded about 40 km by himself.

Fortunately, he was still alive more than one day since Jezebel's threat, but

he found that there was no safe place after walking all day long by himself. He found a humble place to sit under a broom tree, and decided to ask God to die. "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." We didn't read it but in verse 10, he cried out: "I alone am left!"

He made four claims: It is enough, take away my life, I am no better than my ancestors, and I alone am left.

Let me start with his second claim: "Take away my life!" These are such devastating words for a person. What kind of situation causes a person to say that request? I cannot assume his situation. Some interpreters try to describe it by saying that it was burnout from his work because, as I mentioned, God made a miracle through him by sending fire from heaven and letting him slaughter the priests of Baal. However, interpreting Elijah's request to be killed by God as a result of his burnout is not a good explanation, because he wanted to be killed after hearing Jezebel's threat of his life. Therefore, we naturally assume that he was captured by an extreme sense of fear. Interestingly, according to 1 Kings 18, Elijah declared the end of the national drought to King Ahab, and when Ahab rode off and went to Jezreel, Elijah ran in front of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel where Jezebel stayed. We don't know why Elijah came to Jezreel, but we can say that he was somewhat boastful about what he did. However, when he heard Jezebel's threat, he fled. In other words, his extraordinary request "take away my life" to God was not because of burnout but rather of a great fear of his death.

What was God's response to his request, "take away my life"? Interestingly enough, God didn't respond right away. Instead, God made him sleep well, and sent an angel to deliver something to eat and drink. Elijah cried out: "It's enough, my Lord. Please take away my life!" But God offered him a

restful sleep and something to eat. This is like when the Israelites, who during Exodus got the heavenly food called Manna and quails in the desert that they travelled. Like the ancestors who experienced God's guidance, Elijah was served by the heavenly angel. Once again, Elijah cried out in verse 10: "Oh God, I alone am left!" Elijah is shouting. "O God! I'm all alone. Nobody is here! And the queen is looking for my life! I have nowhere to go or hide. See? All I can go is under this broom tree in the wilderness!" He feels the extreme feeling of abandonment because he had to leave all the people. Or their lives would be dangerous too. He is begging God for his life to be taken away and is feeling great suffering from isolation and abandonment.

In his most miserable situation, God answers. "You are not going to die now. And you are not alone. I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal. You have important things to do. Therefore, Elijah, you are saying, it's enough; but you are wrong. It's NOT enough." Elijah was the foremost prophet in his time. Through him, God did lots of miracles and ministries. When he prayed, the national drought ended, the widow of Zarephath's jar of meal wasn't emptied, and her jug of oil didn't fail, and heavenly fire fell and consumed the offerings. All his prayers reached to God, and God offered what he prayed. But this time, when he thought that his time was ended and prayed to take away his life, God didn't listen. This is not because he no longer was God's prophet but because his assumption and his prayer were wrong.

Brothers and sisters, throughout the time of pandemic since last year, we've experienced isolation and loneliness, and for some people, this experience could have created extreme loneliness and worthlessness. We feel like Elijah under a broom tree, which provides a really small shade compared to the size of the dry desert, fleeing from any types of threats and anxieties. Whenever we may feel spread thin, would our feeling be overlapping with

the desperate old man, Elijah? He feels fear, fatigue, hunger, thirst, loneliness, and hopelessness. Each and every one of us has been under the broom tree, and some could probably now be in the middle of sitting under the broom tree. Some of you say, "I haven't been under my broom tree because my life has been all but excessively happy moments." Modern psychiatrists may diagnose it as "mania": If you think you are always high, you need to see a doctor. We don't always have to be under our own broom tree, but be an authentic faith bearer; we need the time under the shadow of the tree. Then that moment may lead you to the presence of divinity. When Elijah was under the broom tree, God comes close, encourages him and consoles him. And God rejuvenates his famished faith and the purpose of his life to re-engaging his vocational ministry. And God convinces him that he is with seven thousand of faithfulness in order not to give up his own life. And so does God to us. When we are under our own broom tree to hide and to undermines ourselves, God always comes and rejuvenates us. My friends of the Christian faith bearers! The divine confrontation between God and Elijah cannot be valid only in the Bible. God came in my past days, God comes today, and is coming to the faithful tomorrow. For all of us who are living out God's Words, God shows his vision and plan. For all of us who are spiritually in need, God consoles us and recalls our purpose in life. It is really graceful when we are being touched by God. And I hope we can hear God's voice, which is quite different from our prejudgment about ourselves and about our situation. God is saying, "My dear, my children. Eat, drink, sleep and get refreshed. You have something to do. It's NOT enough!" May God lead us and feed us in spirit. Amen.