Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 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.” Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. “All at once an angel touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat.’ 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. 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.’ 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.

“Wanna Get Away?” That was the closing tagline of some Southwest Airlines commercials not too long ago. They featured people in situations that found them wanting to be anywhere but where they were. A man delivering water bottles to a home who finds a basketball on the driveway. Picking it up, he shoots…and sends it crashing through the garage door window…with the owners of the home standing right there watching it all. “Wanna Get Away?” “With Southwest Airlines low fares ( ding ), you are now free to move about the country.”

Wanna get away? That’s what Elijah was trying to do in our text for today. He wasn’t free to move about the country. He was a wanted man. Wanted dead, not alive. Our text takes place not long after an amazing day on Mount Carmel. A contest to see whose God was the true God. 850 false prophets of Baal and Asherah and others who had gathered there to see who would win. On your marks, set up your offerings, go. Call on your god! “The god who answers by fire – he is God.” The false prophets of Baal and Asherah were allowed to go first. We’re told that they danced and shouted and slashed themselves until blood flowed but, “there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.”

And then Elijah stepped up to the plate. The first thing he did was to repair the altar of the Lord that the people had allowed to fall into ruins. He arranged the stones and the wood. He cut a bull into pieces and placed it on the altar. He dug a trench around the altar and drenched everything with water. And then he stepped back and prayed, “Answer me, O Lord, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” We’re told that, “the fire of the Lord fell and burned up

the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and licked up the water in the trench.” When the people saw this they hit the ground and cried out, “The Lord – he is God! The Lord – he is God!” They seized the false prophets of Baal and Asherah and put them to death. The sky grew black, the winds rose, and the drought stricken land saw rain once more. The power of God was there for everyone to see! Maybe now things would change! Maybe now people would repent and turn back to God! They didn’t. And when King Ahab told Queen Jezebel about the role Elijah had in putting her prophets to death, she said, “Run for your life tomorrow I do not make your life like one of them.”

But notice what God does with Elijah’s complaints? For the most part he ignores them. God wasn’t about to join Elijah’s pity party, and he’s not going to join ours either. God knows who we are and what we deserve by nature. We’re sinners who deserve his wrath and punishment in hell. But he isn’t going to give that to us because of Jesus. And he isn’t going to give us more than we can handle because of Jesus either. The One who called us to be his own promises to give us what we need to face the challenges and difficulties of life. He tells us in His Word, “we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God…our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all...these have come so that your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes though refined by fire – may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”
It’s been said, “when God lets us stumble, he does so that we may fall into his arms.” When life seems difficult, faith looks to God. Faith realizes our own weaknesses and relies on the strength of God and His promises.

Paul writes in the book of Philippians, “my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus…I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” No job? New job? New position at the same job? New school year? Financial, family, health challenges? Life can be quite a journey! What a journey it had been for Elijah! So weary and exhausted that he fell asleep under a tree. “All at once an angel touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat.’ 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. 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.’ So he got up and ate and drank.” Elijah’s journey was far from over. Strengthened by this miraculous food he would spend another forty days and forty nights on the road. He would travel another 200 miles south to Mt. Horeb, also known as Mt. Sinai, also known as the mountain of God. It was there that Moses met God. It was there that Elijah would meet God too. Not in a powerful wind. Not in an earthquake. Not in a fire, but in a gentle whisper. The gentle whisper of the gospel that assured him he wasn’t alone. He was a child of God. He had reason to live. He had work to do. He was right where God wanted him to be and God would never leave him or forsake him. Things Elijah needed to be reminded of. Things we need to be reminded of too. That we’re at where we’re at in life because that’s where God wants us to be. The One who tells us in His Word, “all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

Although he may have felt alone, God told Elijah he wasn’t alone saying, “I reserve seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.” He had traveled 100 miles south to Beersheba. He had traveled another 200 miles south to Mount Horeb. When he got there, God told him to turn around and go back. He went back with some neat promises as to what the future held. He wouldn’t be killed by Ahab and Jezebel. In fact, Ahab and Jezebel would meet their death at the hands of King Jehu. The prophet Elisha would take over where the prophet Elijah left off. The time would come when Elijah would finally get the rest he wanted when God called him home to heaven in a whirlwind and a chariot of fire. But until that day came, God had work for Elijah to do, just like he has work for us to do.

Wanna Get Away? Sometimes we might wish we didn’t have to deal with some of the things we do. Sometimes we might wish things would work their way out or go away on their own. Things that don’t go our way. Things that are frustrating. Things that lead us to spend too much time looking down and too little time looking up to God in prayer. It’s at times like these that God provides the food we need the most. Not in miraculously baked bread on hot coals, but in the Bread of Life that is ours in Jesus. Ever feel that God doesn’t love you or care about you? Look to the cross and you’ll see how much God loves you and cares about you. He sent his one and only Son to live, die, and rise again for you. A Son who willingly endured the challenges and difficulties of life for you. A Son who lived the perfect life you couldn’t and haven’t. A Son who has forgiven all of your sins and has given you the gift of an eternity in heaven. A Son who gives you the promise that he is with you always to the very end of the age. A Son who gives you the promise that nothing will separate you from his love. A Son who gives you the promise that he is working all things for your good. A Son who gives you the strength to face the challenges of each new day. A Son who served and saved you so that you could serve him by serving others.

Serve God by first and foremost being served by Him. Like Moses and Elijah met God on Mount Horeb, we meet God whenever we gather for worship. Reading your Bible and those Meditation booklets on the table in the narthex. Church on the weekends. Bible classes throughout the week. God called you to faith through His Word. God strengthens your faith through His Word. God calls you to share His Word with others, as individual believers and as members of a Christian congregation. Let it shine in your heart and life. Let it shine into the hearts and lives of those around you. Rise and Shine. Shine and Serve. Serve, even if it feels like sometimes you’re the only one doing so. You’re not. God has many others who are serving Him just like you even if you can’t see it. Serve, even if you face people who say, “that’s not how I would do it, you’re wasting your time, it’ll never work.” God promises to bless the work of his children, as the psalmist writes, “establish the work of our hands for us, yes, establish the work of our hands.” Serve faithfully to the best of your ability with the strength God provides, not working for men, but working for the Lord. The One who promises that the day is coming soon when he will say, “well done good and faithful servant.” Wanna Get Away? I. When life gets you down. II. Look up to God’s promises. Look up to God and his promises and you’ll see that there’s no need to get away. Because God’s got you right where he wants you to be and he promises to give you what you need to do what he wants you to do. ( ding ) You are now free to move about the country to share his love with all people! Amen.