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This will not surprise you that I have been informed on numerous occasions that you are a congregation who loves to eat. Most of us do, but you are in fact a community formed and shaped by table fellowship.

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In that light then, perhaps you've heard the story about a young believer who was visited in a dream by an apostle. And the story goes like this. Let me show you a glimpse of heaven and a glimpse of hell, said the apostle in the dream. Perhaps this vision will help you see how you can bring heaven.

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here on earth. So the wise apostle in the dream showed the young believer a glimpse of hell first. And she looked around in astonishment. At every turn, she saw these beautiful long tables laden with delicious food. It was a banquet of the most exquisite kind.

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She stammered, look more closely, said the apostle. And then upon closer examination, she saw people gathered at the table, but each one was holding a very long-handled spoon. And they were struggling to figure out how to get the food with this long handle into their mouths. They couldn't do it.

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They were able to put these long-handled spoons in their own mouths, and so she could feel and see the anger, the frustration, the fear, and the isolation that filled the stream. But now, said the apostle smiling, watch this.

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The young believer gasped because the setting was exactly the same. There was an exquisite banquet table groaning with savory abundance. People gathered near, and again, they were holding long-handled spoons. But no one was worried about feeding themselves.

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They took their long-handled spoons and focused on feeding one another, the souls on either side of them, the souls across from them. Those beautiful long-handled spoons worked well when reaching mouths beyond their own. Now she saw joy, tenderness, patience, generosity, and love at every turn. Enough said, right?

02:58

It's easy for all of us to become narrowly focused when we're uneasy about our future. And that's why we take a quick dive again into Elijah. Listen again. Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He's scared almost to death. Driven by panic, he finds himself deep in the wilderness alone and undone.

03:28 Debilitated by exhaustion, rattled by isolating fear, he groans a little bit on the melodrama side that it would be so much better for him to die. You see, he assumes that his capacity to live and to grow and be fruitful rests with him alone. So he rages at God and falls asleep.

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Any sense of God's providential care is completely lost upon him at this point. Until. Until he is softened by sleep and wakes, rested and receptive to the Holy by his side. Get up and eat, Elijah, the angel whispers.

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Water and cake are placed by his side. He eats and drinks, sleeps again, and then does it all over again.

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At last, Elijah allows his body and his soul to rest. And it's only after resting that Elijah is able to hear God's crucial question. What are you doing here, Elijah?

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What are you doing here? But Elijah doesn't really get the message. Instead of worrying about why God has called him here and what God wants from him, he is really concerned that God knows how busy and important and zealous he has been on his behalf.

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Again, enough said. I see lots of me in him. But the rest of that passage, which is so rich, is a sermon for another day.

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Edgewood Saints, you are entering a new season. So listen for God's direction when you hear, what are you doing here, Edgewood Saints? Don't worry about a quick answer and don't jump into zealous activity. A la-

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to tend to you as a congregation, to heal you and restore you as you listen for what comes next. As you well know, listening is hard, hard work. But you have been doing it beautifully. I need you to hear that. You have been doing it beautifully.

06:21

You've been listening for God's word. You've been celebrating God's faithfulness. And you've seen that when we remember God's faithfulness, our fears are loosened, our hearts enlarged. And we discover that we can not only feed ourselves, but we can feed our neighbors across the street and across the world.

06:48

When we continue to celebrate God's faithfulness, rather than grumbling about what we don't have, our eyes are opened again and again to the steady companion called abundance. She sits right at our elbows, pleading to be remembered and recognized, celebrated, and shared.

07:16

And it is exactly abundance that is at the heart of our lesson from Luke today. Too often we preacher types make this whole miracle of feeding the 5,000 sound like a Sunday picnic. It may have been for the people who were eating, but it was not the case for Jesus and the disciples.

07:35

Like Elijah, Jesus and the disciples had really been running for their lives. They were striving for a little bit of solitude after addressing the endless needs of the sick and the poor and the suffering, and it wasn't working. They weren't out running the needs. We never do. Another crowd had sniffed out their resting place, and when Jesus saw the crowd headed in his direction,

08:04

He asked this next question with both missional intent and a mischievous glint in his eye. So beloved friends, where are we gonna buy food for all these people?

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Worn out and weary, the disciples honestly did not want to play this game, but they enter in as best they can. Look, Jesus, we have five loaves, two fish. We don't have enough. Not enough food, not enough money, not enough time. But what do the disciples do there? They focus on everything they don't have.

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We all know that never ends well, right?

09:02

Realizing that the disciples really were trying their very hardest to follow Jesus lead, they were just exhausted. Jesus has compassion on their fatigue, on their fears, just like the angel with Elijah. I'll tell you what, he says, have everyone sit down and I'll take it from here.

09:25

It's Jesus' way of saying to the disciples that their posture needed to change a little bit, from one of fretful panic to one of open and receptive trust. Just sit down and get everyone to join you.

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So as soon as the crowd is seated, at least 5,000 people spread out, Jesus gives thanks. And I love this. He lifts up his eyes, blesses and breaks.

10:03

been following his lead ever since. It's really amazing how such a little bit of bread can go such a very long way. And here's the thing. Jesus doesn't organize folks into work teams to go scour the hillside for more food. He doesn't offer a few pious platitudes, promising that everything will work out just fine.

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He doesn't even plead to the heavens asking for more. Nope. Jesus simply gives thanks for what He has in His hands at that very moment. That's it. He's grateful.

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It's as simple and as complicated as that.

11:01

Jesus is grateful. And so of course, you know how it ends. We're told that the crowd had enough to eat that night. Actually, it's crazy. They had more than enough. We're told that there were 12 baskets of leftover breadcrumbs, one basket for each faithful disciple, I'm thinking, who went and picked up all the leftovers.

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It's enough food to feed that crowd in the morning because the disciples had finally gleaned that breadcrumbs, broken bits, tiny little broken bits, they can all become blessing. They had glimpsed the kingdom at that moment. I like to call it manna in the morning. Beloved Edgewood Saints, you know.

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about manna in the morning. You know the gift of trusting that God will provide, often beyond our wildest dreams. And as you know very well, God will provide as we worry less about ourselves and more about the world.

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The disciples who glimpsed the heavenly feast that night were caught up once again in Jesus' mission of tending to hungry bodies and hungry hearts.

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You too know what it's like to be caught up in a vision larger than yourselves. You have been brave and faithful and attentive in these last years. You have not let emotions of fear or sadness or even anger hijack what you believe God has called you to do. So hear this, well done, saints.

13:03

and you've been welcomed home to rest in the congregation that birthed you 70 years ago. It's so funny how God works, isn't it?

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So today, pull out your long-handled spoons. Feed each other, of course, but keep wondering who else you are to feed in this big world of ours. And trust, trust that there will be angels along the way to feed you bread and strengthen you for the journey ahead.

13:43

that there will be angels feeding you bread, and it will strengthen you for the journey ahead. Amen