



Wednesday Prayer

11th Sunday after Pentecost – Strength for the Journey

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.” Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.” 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. 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.” He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. 1 Kings 19:4-8

In this passage, Elijah prays for God to take his life after what he has just endured, after what he has done for the Lord. He goes into the wilderness, possibly trying to escape a multitude of feelings that may include fear, vulnerability, shame, or despair. We cannot know for sure, but we do know he is praying to die. God sends an angel, a messenger encouraging Elijah to get up and eat. The bread and water have been provided. Elijah sleeps and again the messenger comes, to be sure Elijah is given the strength needed to go on.

This week I listened to stories from human trafficking survivors through the [Voices of Freedom Initiative](#), a collaboration between StoryCorps and The Office on Trafficking in Persons. In the past, I’ve heard survivors share times when they had wished they would die. They’ve felt fear, vulnerability, shame, despair, and much more. As they are recovering, they share how someone stepped in with the care they needed for their healing journey. They were given the opportunity to show their strength.

Those in the StoryCorps panel talked about our shared humanity and what this meant to them. Harold D’Souza talked about how he felt when serving on the United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking as a survivor. He was addressed as “Honorable Harold D’Souza” after years of hearing “Hey illegal, get over here” when he was being trafficked. Wilnisha Sutton didn’t know she was being trafficked as she was called a prostitute and that’s all she heard. It took going to Ghana for her to see how black women were protected and she says, “I’ve never felt this protected or felt this seen in America.” She came back to work with young girls and women, bringing empathy, love, understanding, and helping them see strength in themselves. She asks that we bring this to others.

Lord, give us strength for the journey, and may we be messengers of your love and care, opening opportunities for all to show their strength. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director, and community advocate for racial justice.

Harold’s story: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ss_hgdwfVEU
Wilnisha’s story: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHuhdZdX4wo>