Text: 1 Kings 19:1-18

**Introduction**

Talking about a Sabbath is the one place where Luther changed or at least shaded the definition. To a Jew the Sabbath was the 7th day, the day of creation that God rested from his labors. God rests, you rest. At some point the early church moved that sabbath to the The LORD’s Day – the day of resurrection or if you use John’s language, the eighth day - the first day of the first week of the new creation. The light is just beginning to spread.

But to Luther the Sabbath isn’t about a specific day. It is about hearing and receiving the Word of God. His explanation of the third commandment states that “we should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.” In light of our gospel lessons these three weeks you could say that a Sabbath is any time you receive the Bread of Life.

The Sabbath is not about anything we ourselves do. In fact we can’t force a Sabbath. We can’t force either the rest or the light. What Jesus says about a Sabbath is that “it was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The Pharisees constantly pressured Jesus and his disciples for doing all kinds of things they labeled as “work” on the Sabbath. He would heal. They would glean some pieces of wheat. They would walk too far. And all of these things were good for both Jesus and the disciples and for the people they healed or journeyed to preach to. But it “broke the Sabbath.” They were not respecting the commanded rest. Jesus’ words are part of what Luther leaned upon in his definition. The Sabbath is not about our acts. We can do anything to force a Sabbath. But the Sabbath was made for us. It is when God gives us the bread of life.

**Text**

Now God has been exceedingly kind in these regards. He has promised to be present – to supply a sabbath in this meal. This bread and wine is the body and blood of Christ. If you approach you will receive. The question of course is if we receive this sabbath in faith for our good, or if we receive it in unbelief toward our judgement. Do we hold what happens sacred and gladly receive what God is giving us? Or do we despise it? Any time the Sabbath comes – any time we are offered the bread of life, we have this question of faith. But it is still part of the Kindness and Providence of God that he has created regular Sabbaths. Whenever two or three are gathered in my name. Whenever we do this in remembrance of Him. When we proclaim the Lord’s death until his comes.

But our Old Testament Lesson today speaks of a different type of Sabbath. And irregular Sabbath. A surprising Sabbath.

The scene is one of the great switches in the bible and it doesn’t really make sense. Elijah has proclaimed a drought on the Kingdom and been miraculously kept with the Widow of Zarephath. The flour and oil of what were near empty jars lasted for three years, while he stayed with her and her son. The son dies, and Elijah raised him from the dead. Eventually God relents and sends Elijah back. And Elijah confronts Ahab and 450 prophets of Baal. He ridicules them and eventually God proves himself sending down the fire from heaven. And Elijah and the people who have seen it seize the prophets of Baal and slaughter them all. And then the Heavens open up with rain.

You would think that after such a demonstration that Elijah’s spirit would be full. That he would have eaten of the bread of life and moved on to take care of Ahab and Jezebel. That if he could laugh at and ridicule 450 prophets, he could laugh at a boast like Jezebel’s letter threatening to treat him like those slaughtered prophets. But he can’t. “Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life.”

Sabbaths are strange. We tend to think that they are these mountaintop experiences. And yes we probably all have at least one of those. For a certain age group, that was church camp. Or maybe you ran across the preacher that every word just worked. Or the soup kitchen gal who was on a mission to save someone. Or you had some type of mystical experience. And we tend to try and chase those experiences. But its been my experience that as memorable as they might be, what they really do is leave us exhausted. We’ve been overwhelmed and realize just how small we might be. Or we’ve seen the light, and regular life just seems so dark afterwards. There is something about being in the presence of the glory of the King. Like playing with a Lion. Until you see the claws. But that isn’t the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man. The Christ of the Sabbath is not the glory, but the bread of life.

Elijah has seen the glory, and is scared that he might never see it again. He’s seen the power, and knows that he can’t control it. That the next time Jezebel comes, the fire won’t come down.

**Christology**

And so he goes a days journey into the wilderness and sits down under the tree. And he begins to bargain with God. We’ve been there. Whether it is show it to me again, or spare me what I know is coming, or some other peculiar request. Elijah’s bargain. I’ll never be on a mountaintop that high again. Take me now. “It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life.”

And this is the purpose of a Sabbath. Because the Sabbath is made for man. “As he lay down and slept, an angel touched him and said to him ‘arise and eat.’ And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water.” The Sabbath is when God knows our frame. He remembers that we are but dust. That our days are like grass. And his steadfast love provides for our weakness. “Arise and eat.”

And Elijah ate, and he drank, and he lay down again.

And this is the purpose of a Sabbath. Because the Sabbath is made for man. And God can provided it just when we need it. “And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, ‘arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.’”

We bargain to go. We bargain to stay in the vision. “Let us put up three booths,” said Peter. We bargain to stay on the mountaintop. We bargain for the power and glory. But the power and the glory were not made for us. The Sabbath was made for man. The journey is too great for us. So the Angel of the LORD gives us his food. He gives us the bread of Life.

**Moral**

The Jews are constantly asking for signs. Paul says the Greeks seek wisdom. He’s being nice. Jesus says they Lord it over them and exercise authority (Matt 20:25). James and John want the seats at the right hand the left. We are constantly after the power and the glory.

Meanwhile Jesus is constantly telling us to ask for the better stuff. Ask for the living water. Ask for the bread of life. Ask for the Father to be glorified. Ask for the Helper the Spirit. Ask for a Sabbath. Ask for the LORD to remember our frame. That the journey is too long, and to give us bread for the journey.

We need a lot more Sabbaths than we do mountaintops.

**Eschatological**

Because the Sabbath was made for man.

Elijah arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

We don’t get to skip the journey and it is too much for us. But God provides.

He provides the regular promised Sabbaths. We should all make diligent use of the means of grace.

But He also provides the unexpected ones. The Sabbaths that come when we are desperate and unexhausted under the broom tree. Ask. And God provides what was made for us – a Sabbath of fine food. The Bread of Life. Enough for the 40 days. Enough to get us to the final mountain.

It is the Sabbaths that we need. Ask him for that bread.