

“I can do it by myself,” I remember my son telling me as he was learning to tie his shoes. “I don’t need your help.” I sat there patiently watching him try to make one loop and wrap the string around it. After several attempts, he looked at me and said, “I guess I could use a little help.”

Throughout much of our lives, we often say, “I can do it myself,” wanting to show the world we can be independent, whether it’s learning a new skill, being a single parent, completing homework, or cooking a meal. There’s something gratifying about being able to do something alone, for it gives us the courage to navigate through the world.

On the other hand, Anthony DeMello writes in his book *Awareness* that to genuinely love another we “must learn to see again. And if you wish to see, you must give up your...dependency. Tear away the tentacles of society that have enveloped you and suffocated your being...In your heart, you will now be free at last...[People] no longer have the power to make you happy or miserable.”¹

DeMello urges us to wake up in our spiritual lives and recognize that we cannot depend on others for

our happiness, though he clarifies that “We all depend on one another for all kinds of things...the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker. Interdependence. That’s fine!”²

Interdependence is something the prophet Elijah discovered during a drought as he learned to trust in God’s care. The narrator tells us that God had the ravens bring him food. These birds were considered unclean animals, so it’s surprising that they would be the delivery system, which one author suggested shows us that “God’s manner of provision can be surprising or unusual.”³ Sometimes God does things we might not expect, going against the norms.

After the stream he had been drinking from dried up, Elijah felt a gentle tug from God to head to Zarephath. This was not a nearby town, but a place 50 to 60 miles away, which for him was another country, a place unfamiliar filled with people he did not know. Once again, we see that following God can lead to some unpredictable places.

After walking a couple days, probably without much food or water, Elijah arrived at the home of a

2

widow in this faraway town and asked for some bread and water.

She replied, “I swear, as surely as your God lives, I don’t have so much as a biscuit. I have a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a bottle; you found me scratching together just enough firewood to make a last meal for my son and me. After we eat it, we’ll die.”⁴

“What?” I imagine Elijah objecting to God, “You sent me all the way over here walking several days to this strange place to ask for food from someone who barely has enough to get through the day herself?! What’s with that plan?” Once again, God’s invitation seems a bit odd—asking food from someone who doesn’t have much to offer!

Elijah replied in a way that have may sounded rude, “Go ahead and do what you have planned, but first bring me something to eat.” But he also offered a promise—that the jar of flour and the bottle of oil would not run out before it rained again. And amazingly that’s what happened. Later, when her son died, Elijah was able to restore him to life.

The woman and Elijah both learn that they were interdependent, that they could provide something for one another in a time of need. As one writer noted,

Elijah—one of the greatest prophets claimed by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—couldn’t survive without help. Even Elijah couldn’t do it alone. For us, independence is revered as a great accomplishment. But it can come at a great cost. Independence can lead to isolation, and isolation to despair. Instead, God has created us to be interdependent on one another. We were made to be in community, to live and work alongside others, relying upon their gifts and sharing ours.⁵

We all need each other from time to time, not to make us happy or joyful, but for the blessings that come from living in community, for none of us can go it alone. I’m grateful that I can go to the store to purchase food, but I’m also glad that I can prepare it myself. Although I can read the Bible by myself, I find my understanding enriched as I read it in study with others. I can worship God at home by myself, but through our community of faith, I find a richer, deeper experience as we come together. Being with one another has been hard the past seven months, but we

3

have found creative ways to gather to encourage one another.

On this All Saints' Day, I'm reminded of those who have influenced our lives that I may not even know, for many people have gone before us to create this amazing place in which we worship. Without the many generations before us, we might not be sitting here today. They continue to remain a part of our community of faith even though they have entered the mysterious realm that awaits us all after death. Take a moment and look around.

What do you see here that reminds you of someone? ...

Think about someone who is no longer here who has influenced your faith...

All Saints' Day began on May 13 in 609 to recognize the martyrs, those who died for their faith, but a little over a century later the day was expanded to recognize all the saints. While some Christians may think of only those saints recognized in an official way, many view this day as a way of recognizing all

those fellow believers who have gone before us, recognizing that none of us are perfect but follow God the best way we can. Either way we view the idea of a saint, the day reminds us that we can't go it alone, for we are connected to one another. It may feel odd to think of those we can't see as still influencing our lives, but over the past several months, we've all experienced a different kind of connection through our virtual worship experiences. Even though we haven't been in one place in the normal way, our lives have still been interconnected together.

You and I may not need one another to make us happy, but we do need one another through this community of faith, for in gathering together—whether online or in person—we experience God's presence among us, who is with us no matter what happens. When life seems crazy, just as mixed up as when Elijah had to walk for days to find food and water, we're reminded that we don't have to go it alone, for God is already with us.

¹ Anthony DeMello, *Awareness: The Perils and Opportunities of Reality*, 172.

² Ibid. 53.

³ <https://www.workingpreacher.org>, November 1, 2020.

⁴ 1 Kings 17:12, *The Message Bible*

⁵ Narrative Lectionary Program 1 2020-21 Worship Resources, 69.