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Jessica: Welcome to Lectionary Kickstart.  
We're sparking your thoughts for Sunday as you plan your sermon and teaching lesson. I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau, here with Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger.  
They're both professors of homiletics here at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.  
You can hear all about us in our introductory episode, but trust me, they are pretty good preachers.  
Usually.  
All right, let's get started.

Peter: Peter, where are we in the church here?  
We are in the 12th week after Pentecost, where we continue to think about and reflect on the work of God's Spirit in his church for the sake of his world.

Jessica: And David, what's the text this week?

David: Our readings are 1 Kings 19, Ephesians 4.  
We're doing a continuous reading through Ephesians, and then John 6 and Psalm 34.

Jessica: As always, I ask each of you to tell me which text you would choose to preach about to determine who goes first, since we're kind of on a bread of life run for a few Sundays in the text. I want to know your favorite kind of bread, and if it is my favorite kind, you get to go first.

David: Oh, I like Union loafers.  
It's sourdough.

Peter: Union loafers.  
What's Union loafers?

David: It's down in the city.

Peter: Oh, it's a bread company.

David: Yeah, it's a bread company.  
Oh, man, you have to get there early and stand in line, and it is so good.  
Oh, man.

Peter: I like cinnamon raisin swirl for breakfast with a whole lot of butter on it.

Jessica: Yes!

David: Awesome.

Jessica: Yes!

David: Oh, man!

Jessica: So even though that's not my favorite kind of bread, I will go with Peter because cinnamon raisin bread is really good for breakfast.  
Great, you win.  
Peter, you get to go first.

Peter: All right.  
Well, I am continuing a series of sermons on Ephesians 4 to 6 that began last week. In these chapters, Paul's talking about how we walk as Christians.  
If you remember from last week, I suggested we call this series Walk This Way. And then each Sunday, you talk in some way about doing something like this.  
So last week, it was we're eager for this, maintain the unity in the bond of peace.  
And this week, I'd suggest that you have a sermon where you encourage people to think

about talking like this.

So talk like this.

David: So what are the sermons in the series?

Peter: Okay, so I haven't nailed it down precisely, but the general idea would be, eager for this would have been last week.

Talk like this would be this Sunday's.

Then use your time like this.

The fourth one would be something like marriage like this, or married like this, something along those lines.

And then the last one would be stand like this.

David: Okay, great.

Thanks.

Peter: So the theme for today's or this week's sermon is talk like this.

And I get that because the verses say a lot in this reading from Ephesians about how we talk.

So Jessica, would you read verses 29 to 32.

Jessica: Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Peter: All right, so the idea here is in these verses, Paul's talking about how we talk.

So remember, the four verse one kind of began the series where Paul urged the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which they have been called.

And then verse 17 of today's text, Paul says, you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do.

And one of the ways in which we walk is the way we talk.

So walk is kind of a metaphor for living, about how we talk.

And so I thought I would maybe begin a sermon like this by thinking about accents.

It was funny, I was down in Texas over spring break with my sons, and I'm not from Texas.

I grew up here in St. Louis, but my parents are Texan.

And I went down and we saw some family members, my uncle and some other family members.

And we got in the car to come home and my boy said, you sound like you got a Texan drawl.

David: You did?

Peter: Yeah.

David: Oh my gosh.

Peter: And I said, no, I didn't.

And they both said, oh yeah, you did.

And they heard something that I couldn't hear that apparently I must have picked up something for my parents or being back in Texas.

Jessica: It comes back.

Peter: Yeah.

Jessica: When I go back up to Wisconsin, my accent gets thicker.

Totally.

It just comes back.

Peter: You're from Wisconsin originally?

Yeah.

Peter: So yeah, that comes out.

And you're from St. Louis.

David: I know.

Car, Fark, 40, 44.

Hardy Fark.

Look at that horse.

Gosh.

I'm going to do the wash.

Peter: So accents to me are really interesting to think about because accents, you often don't hear your own accent because it just sounds normal.

You start to talk like the people that you hear talk.

And so as I was thinking about that, I was thinking about the church's position and standing in our culture today, our situation.

And there's a lot of voices out there that are very loud that have a definite accent.

We take on the people that we listen to.

We start to talk like them.

And so you could talk small groups, a classroom or a school or a neighborhood or broader cultural conversation that gets at what you're talking about.

When I think about the accent I hear today, I hear a lot of people speaking with an accent of fear, fear of what we might lose, what we have lost, what we miss, what we long for.

There's a variety of ways you could look at it.

So I'd maybe think about my local context if I was preaching on this text.

But I think the idea is Christians speak with a definite accent.

And this text actually gives us some guidance for how you might describe that.

And so what I'd kind of like to do is use the sermon to describe a Christian accent

and think of church and worship as a time to work on our language skills to practice speaking.

David: Immersive, immersion experiences.

Peter: That's how you learn language.

Language learning.

So the things I would draw from the text that would describe maybe what fits our culture today and by culture, I mean kind of American context.

Paul talks about slander and bitterness and wrath and anger instead.

And there would be three things I think you could draw from this text.

First of all, use language, speak an accent that builds up.

This is verse 29, the beginning of verse 29.

Only such as is good for building up.

So language is not so much how you sound, but what your language is doing.

It's building others up.

Particularly in the body of Christ here.

And so that would be one language that builds up rather than tears down.

And of course we can all think of times probably when someone has said things to us that built us up and sometimes when people have spoken in a way that tears us down.

David:

You know, and that's kind of, you know, have you ever heard people talk about Christianese? Where you say something that sounds Christian, but it's sentimentalized or it's just, it's not true.

It's not earthy.

It's not real.

And that doesn't build up.

That kind of makes you feel smaller because, oh yeah, I don't have the right lingo to talk that way.

But you're talking about an accent that actually builds up, that names things as they are and is done in compassion and love and truth and builds you up.

Peter:

So but however you want to talk about the language that builds up and acts, Christians speak in a way that builds others up.

And that's really in contrast to the culture today in which we speak, I think.

Jessica:

How lovely to even have that accent in a sermon.

I think sometimes as teachers or preachers in the church, you are concerned about the influence of the world on the people that you care about.

The outside world says this, but we say this.

Not these ideas are bad, but these people are bad instead of these people need what we have.

Like they need God's love.

They need to hear it.

And so it kind of puts you on edge against the new way.

But then you're on edge against your neighbors and the people you're supposed to be witnessing to and loving.

Peter:

Well this is related to, I think, the eighth commandment, you know, explain everything in the kindest way or that kind of language where it's, you speak in a way that is constructive and that builds up and that encourages.

That's how Christians talk.

That's how, even when we speak the truth, even when we have to speak a hard truth, we do still want a way that encourages and that builds up.

And so that would be one thing to draw from the text.

Another way that Paul speaks here is he says at the end of verse 29 that it may give grace to those who hear.

So if building up is kind of, if you look at it like a target, where building up is kind of the broadest ring and then you zoom in a little bit more, okay, we're going to speak in a way that gives grace.

So it's even more, a little bit more precise.

How do you give grace?

You're speaking with a gracious accent that is, that cares for the good, the benefit of the people to whom you're speaking.

And so that would be, maybe I'd set that as opposed to speaking in a way that gets even.

You know, it's always easy to want to speak in ways that kind of tit for tat, get people back, someone talked this way to me, so I'm going to talk this way to them.

David:

Right.

Peter:

Type of thing.

And then you could zoom in a little bit further.

So I'm imagining this target where it builds up, gives grace, and then the center of it would be actually the last line of the verse 32, last line of chapter four, where Paul

calls us to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

And so this is language that is even more precise.

This is language of forgiveness.

David: You know what, instead of a target, why don't we think about that as like ripples from a stone that's been thrown in the water.

Because that gets you to baptism and baptismal waters.

Right.

And the stone is the forgiveness, is the work of Christ, and out of that flows these ripples, right?

Peter: Okay, so if you did that, you'd start with kind of verse 32.

David: No, I think you could still do it this way.

Well, you could do it either way.

Peter: You could talk about the forgiveness we've heard, then we speak that kind of forgiveness.

David: I mean, I'm thinking like, you know, you're talking about, you know, like an outsider might encounter these ripples on the water, and they encounter this place where people are being built up.

And then they move in a little bit further, and they see that this is gracious speech, and then finally they get to the center of it.

So this is what happened that causes everybody to live this way and talk this way.

Peter: Yeah, I like that.

David: Anyway, I'm just thinking.

Peter: Do you like the target or the water more?

Jessica: I think the ripples would be less on the attack, right?

Because if you have a target, it's usually because you're gonna fire at it.

So maybe ripples.

Peter: Okay, so the ripples, what I like about that idea, Dave, is that the forgiveness then is at the heart of it.

David: Right, yeah, that's the beauty.

The heart of what we hear that shapes everything else is the word of forgiveness that we have from God in Christ.

And that ripples out into our lives.

It leads us to speak graciously, it leads us to build up others with our words, and that's a Christian accent that we hear and we practice every Sunday.

Jessica: And that's something you can model for us in the pulpit, too.

Because when we hear you talk about the culture not as trying to get us, but as hurting, you know, or not as the world being on attack you, but the world is suffering and they need what God has given us.

So you could model that to us.

That's a great idea.

Peter: Yeah, that's an accent of confidence and courage and trust rather than fear.

Jessica: How about you, David?

David: What would you preach on?

I'm going to preach on the Old Testament reading from 1 Kings.

Jessica: Oh, good, I was hoping somebody would take that one.

David: Somebody was going to preach on Elijah.

Yeah, and I don't know, part of me thinks, you know, a theme or a title could be strength for the journey, but another part of me thinks that I might call it something like unexpected Sabbaths.

So, you know, we have the expected Sabbath that God, you know, has designed for us, that

there's one day a week when we rest from our labors, and because God rested from His labor

in creating the world, or because God delivered us from slavery in Egypt, you've got two different reasons for it, but God has designed a Sabbath for us.

And it's a Sabbath that we take.

It's a Sabbath that we live in.

But then there's other times when Sabbaths overtake us, and that's the unexpected Sabbath.

And usually they're, from our perspective, they're not good.

They're those moments when we are just completely worn out.

But they're moments when God comes and makes an unexpected Sabbath of our complete exhaustion.

And that's what I see going on with Elijah in this text.

We've got these other two bookends.

You've got the one bookend before this moment when Elijah has been competing with the prophets

of Baal and asked them to call their God down to burn the sacrifice and nothing's happening and even makes fun of them.

Well maybe he's in the bathroom, right?

So all that kind of stuff.

And then he calls on Yahweh, and Yahweh burns up the sacrifice and burns up all of the water.

So that's happening before.

So you've got this monumental, miraculous divine intervention.

And I mean, this is what sometimes Christians, I think, secretly hope for, that you know, my son would just believe if God would just do this, right?

I know, if you could just call it on fire and wipe all those people out, then they'll believe, right?

So you've got this miraculous momentous moment of God's intervention.

And then you've got Elijah going into the wilderness saying, kill me God, I'm done.

I am done.

And then you've got the other bookend where God finally does appear to him in the cave.

And remember there's the wind and the flame and all of that stuff.

And it's a still small voice and God reveals them.

So you've got these three stories, which is this remarkable journey of Elijah

from this miraculous powerful God slaying all of the enemies to this very quiet God saying, I've already preserved people who have not bowed their knees to Baal.

You're not the only one left.

So we've got kind of these bookends of divine revelations to Elijah.

And he's going to be journeying from a God of power and force and full revelation

to a God of mystery and hiddenness and very simple security that this God has preserved people for you.

So we've got this journey and in the middle we have this moment where Elijah is giving up and God takes his moment of giving up and makes it a Sabbath, a time of rest for him so he can continue in the journey.

So I just kind of like the story because of that.

But you've got all this stuff on the outside that isn't read.

Peter: Well that's the challenge too and I think it's a challenge to take to locate this. Even just the existence of Elijah, where does he fit in the story? I don't think you can assume much about people even knowing where that is.

So just even just a little bit of context for where we're at in the whole Old Testament narrative and then kind of the context of God's work in Elijah's life and then that gets you to the text.

David: Right, yeah.

So and the, I don't know, I think the text is really, really thick with irony.

And so Jessica, if you could read verse four.

Jessica:

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree and he asked that he might die saying, it is enough now, oh Lord take away my life for I am no better than my father's.

David: Okay so this is a really low moment for Elijah and I think that that that line, it is enough, summarizes it all.

Peter: I've had enough.

David: I know.

Have you had situations like that?

Peter: Everyone can relate to it's enough, I can't take anymore.

David: I know.

I'm done.

I've had enough.

And so you've got the irony that Elijah could have stayed there and been killed by Jezebel and instead he travels alone into a wilderness to be with God and he prays that God will let him die,

that God will take him.

So he's, you know, you've got this really, I don't know, I mean I think there's people who can identify with their Elijah moments, right, and this is one of those Elijah moments, it's enough Lord.

So that's the first irony.

The second irony.

Peter: Even if they don't right now, part of what you're doing is you're equipping them for when that time comes.

David: Right.

Peter: So I think you can actually say, you know, some of you are there right now, some of you have been

there, some of you haven't been here yet.

David: Yes.

Peter: But let me tell you, the time will come.

David: Yeah right.

And so Elijah does the right thing and at least he brings the burden before God.

It doesn't destroy his prayer life.

You know, he's not saying I'm not going to talk to God, I'm not going to, you know, no, I'm not taking things into my own hands, I'm going to put it in God's hands, but this is what I want.

I've had enough, take me now.

And so that's the first irony.

Then the second irony is you have Jezebel who has sent her messengers to Elijah, right?

So Jezebel sends the messenger to Elijah telling him that, you know, she's going to kill him or she's going to have him killed.

And now Yahweh sends a messenger to Elijah.

So now you have another messenger.

Jessica: Nice, nice.

David: Right, right, but instead of the messenger from Jezebel who's going to try to kill you, you have God send a messenger whose purpose is to sustain you.

Right, whose purpose is to take your Elijah moment and make it a Sabbath, make it an unexpected

Sabbath in the middle of your life.

And so if you, Jessica, could read verse five, we'll read five through, five through eight.

Jessica: And he lay down and slept under a broom tree and behold 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.

That sounds kind of good by the way.

That sounds delicious.

David: It wasn't raisin bread.

It was actually sourdough.

Jessica: But it was fresh.

It was fresh hot bread.

I love it.

And a jar of water and he ate and drank and lay down again.

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.

And he arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb the mount of God.

David: Okay, and that's where that next revelation happens.

And so I just love this little moment.

God doesn't speak personally to Elijah here.

God sends a messenger and the messenger does the simplest things, right?

So God before, you know, lightning comes down from heaven, consumes all this fire, and then you have a bloodbath of all the prophets.

And here, I mean, the angel touches him, right?

Yeah, rather than yelling at somebody, wake up rather than shaking them, right?

The angel touches him, you know, makes contact, touches him and then bakes food, right?

It's a cake baked on stones, a jar of water, and Elijah eats and drinks and goes back to sleep.

And then the angel comes a second time, again touches him and then says, for the journey is too great for you.

So God knows when it is too much.



God knows when it is enough.

And the way God in this text intervenes is God sends a messenger who does the simplest things.

And I think sometimes in our lives, there are messengers who come.

You know, they may not be angels.

They may be fellow Christians who just say the right thing, who, you know, touch your hand and hold you and try to talk with you about something when you're in that moment.

I think it's a beautiful, just a beautiful text.

Peter: There's a couple ways to think about that.

One is you can imagine yourself as the preacher, as a messenger, coming to bring strength and sustenance to those who are at the end of their rope.

You could also encourage your members to imagine themselves as messengers who are sent to bring that strength and that comfort in the Lord to others around them.

And so it would be a way to build up the whole community, to imagine what's even happening here is that promised strength that God offers.

David: Right.

Yeah.

And then for me, you know, kind of in a mysterious way, Elijah is kind of a type of Christ who is the one who comes and bears what is too much for us, which is the punishment for our sin, and then rises and gives us his strength so that we can continue the journey.

So I would kind of, you know, look at Christ as the one who, you know, actually does give His spirit over to the Father.

Peter: Yeah.

I think about Paul's language in 2 Corinthians.

My grace is sufficient.

David: Right.

Peter: For you that Jesus promises is the strength that we need.

David: Yeah.

And, you know, into your hands I commit my spirit.

And Jesus does what Elijah was doing here.

He gives it up to the Lord.

He gives his life to the Lord, to God his Father for the sake of his people who can't take it.

And then we walk the rest of our lives and the strength that he gives.

And in this community of messengers who hear us when we're saying it is enough and who reach out and share with us the little that they have which will be sufficient for us in our journey.

Jessica: I love it.

That's awesome.

This is a powerful story for me.

David: It is.

Jessica: God knows that the journey was too hard for him.

Oh, I'm so glad God knows.

David: I know.

Isn't that nice?

Jessica: I'm glad he knows that it's too hard for me.

David: Because that's what you think.

You think God doesn't know.

If you think about it, Elijah had to have shared the story with somebody.

Because how else would we know that this happened?

He's the only one in the wilderness.

He left his servant behind.

And so when he came out of that wilderness he had to have shared the story with somebody.

And he must have thought that, you know what, this will be of comfort to people to share what happened to him alone in the wilderness when he wanted to die.

Peter: Yeah.

David: And the Lord brought him to life.

Jessica: This is lovely.

How encouraging.

Who doesn't feel like that sometimes?

David: Oh, I know.

Jessica: Knowing that God knows that the journey is too hard for me and he is going to sustain me.

David: And he responds.

Jessica: He didn't take Jezebel away.

He's just still alive for a while.

But he sustained you through it.

David: Right.

And that's what I would call an unexpected Sabbath.

Peter: I like that.

I like that idea of the unexpected Sabbath.

Because so often we have to kind of in our context schedule days off.

Schedule times.

And sometimes you schedule a day off and it doesn't actually happen because you just get bombarded with other stuff.

And so this rest that God provides, even when we haven't expected it, that's helpful.

Jessica: Well, that's all for today.

We have free resources to guide that next step in planning at [ConcordiaTheology.org](http://ConcordiaTheology.org).

Check it out.

I'm your host and producer, Jessica Bordeleau.

Join us next week here at Lectionary Kickstart when Dr. David Schmitt and Dr. Peter Nafzger will spark your thoughts for next Sunday.

David: Look at that harsh.

I'm going to do the wash.