

There can be no doubt that no matter the sport, in order to be a legit Olympian, you have to have a certain amount of stamina. The amount of pressure they have on them for what amounts to honestly only a few minutes of competition for most of them is unthinkable. It doesn't matter if you're playing ping pong or spinning off a diving board, you've gotta have some oomph to be an Olympian, and there was one person who proved that more than many others this week. Katie Ledecky, who after her week in Tokyo is solidly considered the greatest female swimmer of all time.

Even before Tokyo there was little question of Katie's greatness. She has 15 world championship gold medals and shows a fierce calmness in the pool that is unparalleled. What's even more astounding about her is that the longer the race is, the more she thrives. After years of campaigning to get the women's 1500 race into the Olympics, it finally happened this year, and Katie unquestionably one gold after swimming for just under 16 minutes straight. It's ridiculous the amount of miles she has logged in the pool, and last Monday confirmed that beyond a shadow of a doubt.

On Monday alone, Katie logged 2100 meters in the pool, the most any female swimmer has ever swum in one day at the Olympics, and what was even crazier is that she did all of that under an immense time crunch. Monday morning she had to swim the 400 meter final and then be ready to

jump back in the pool that evening for *two* prelim races to qualify for the 200 meter and the 1500 meter. For those last two races of the night, she barely had two hours inbetween them to get her body back and ready to race. That is a ridiculous schedule and the commentators went through a painstaking description of what she would need to do to keep her body primed for decent swimming. They talked about her warm-down time, the demands of interviews and drug testing, but they said most important would be two things, the chance to catch some tiny scrap of sleep and to make sure that she got calories into her system. They talked in detail about her process when it came to nutrition and body bounce back, talking about protein bars and chocolate milk and how she knew what her body would need in order to feel capable of getting back in the pool to swim the 1500.

The entire process sounded grueling and just plain exhausting. How one can put their body through that much in such a short period of time is incomprehensible, and yet she did it, and *killed* it in the process. She didn't just swim, she *swam*, hard and solidified why she is absolutely the best. But a huge part of that was recognizing, knowing what her body needed in order to be at its best, what it needed, what *she* needed in order to compete to the best of her ability. At the end of the day, she knew she needed a nap and a snack, that was the only way she was going to get through.

It's not a unique scenario actually, but in fact one that we find in our first lesson this morning, because yes, while the Bible holds many incredible things, it does also completely and totally endorse the profound importance of sleep and snacks. In order to discover the truth of that, all you have to do is ask Elijah, who finds himself in an extremely difficult and disheartening situation this morning, but one that God solves quite literally with a nap and a snack, because sometimes God operates in the simplest of ways.

Elijah basically finds himself on the run this morning. He has just had a massive showdown with the group of prophets that Queen Jezebel had employed to pretty much tell her whatever she wanted to hear. She had challenged Elijah to go up against her prophets to see which one of them was more powerful, and Elijah didn't just win, he dominated. He dominated, by, well...killing all of her prophets. It isn't the nicest picture, but life in the Old Testament was a bit like the Wild West, and we just have to go with it. So, as you can imagine, the queen is none too pleased with Elijah after he has destroyed all of her prophets and so now, she's after him to take care of him once and for all, and she's informed him that her plan is to kill him, no questions asked, no sugarcoating to the message.

Elijah flees into the wilderness and collapses underneath a tree completely spend and exhausted. He's at the end of his rope and he doesn't

know how in the world he is going to survive the situation that he's in. There in the middle of the wilderness, on his own, he tells God he wants to die. He's weary, he feels guilty for what he did, and he's just kind of done. He tells God that it is enough, now. He just wants to let it all go, and he wants God to help him do that. After using the last of his strength to pray one last desperate prayer, Elijah falls asleep, only to be awoken by an angel who points to a cake that has been baked on a stone nearby and a jug of water. The angel tells him to get up and eat, and then go back to sleep, and he listens. He eats and once again, he sleeps. The angel wakes him up again, and invites him one more time to eat, because otherwise the journey ahead will be too much for him. Life will be too much for him. His call will be too much for him, if he doesn't rest, if he doesn't eat, if he doesn't take care of himself, physically and mentally.

Despite his previous prayer to be able to just let go, Elijah does as he is told. He eats, he sleeps, he snacks, he rests, and after he does this pattern a couple of times, he is renewed, restored, refreshed, ready to go back out onto the road and face whatever the world might throw at him. Our passage ends by telling us that the meal he ate there in the wilderness, the rest he took gave him enough strength to survive forty days traveling to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. 40 days...on a little bit of bread, water, and

rest. He just needed that little bit of time for his brain to slow down, his heart to heal, and for his body to recuperate, so that he could see clearly and figure out that there were other paths ahead, paths he could handle.

Elijah might not have thought so at the time, but it does seem that God answered his prayer. God did hear him and essentially agreed, yes, it is enough. You have had enough for now. Now, all you have to do is rest and restore your strength. Take a nap, eat a snack, and when you get back up, the world won't seem so bleak, so unforgiving, so relentless. God is saying, yeah, you have been through something awful and it takes it all out of you, but you don't have to give up, you just need a break. You have done enough, now it is time to rest, because there is more ahead, more that you can do, you just can't see that yet because you're completely exhausted.

We all know how Elijah felt, sitting there underneath that tree in the middle of nowhere, bone-weary and uncertain if he could take another step. If the last year hasn't brought you at least one of those moments, then some other time in your life has most likely found you just wanting to sink to the ground and say you know what, I'm done, I can't do this anymore. There is nothing more for me to do, so I'm going to sit here, and just let it all go. Those moments are exhausting when you already feel exhausted. You have no idea how you're going to keep going or even if you want to. We all

know what it feels like to just want to give up. Because let's face it, life is hard. It doesn't matter how old you are or what you've been through. It doesn't matter if life has been a breeze or a constant battle. At some point, we all have stared life down and say, you are way too hard for me. We all have probably prayed similar prayers to Elijah. God, I've had enough.

Yet, we've all also probably had those moments when God answers those prayers in simple, small ways. The phone call from a friend just to say hi. The perfect warm cup of coffee that makes the tension in your muscles ease. That rock solid nap where you are just completely out. The slice of cake that eases the rumble in your stomach and kicks a little sugar into your system. Sometimes, that is how God works in the world...through naps and snacks. And that's ok. God doesn't always have to act in these big, huge, dramatic ways. Sometimes it is enough for God to say, yes, I hear you, everything is overwhelming, everything is hard, you have had a totally rough go of it, so sit down, put your feet up, have a snack, and take a nap.

In the world we live in, the world that demands we are going, going, going all of the time, we don't see these things as holy. We see them as lazy, as not doing enough, as something people who don't have anything to do take part in. If you aren't busy, you aren't worthy of attention, you aren't worthy, period. If you aren't running around like crazy, from one place to

another, well then you aren't successful, you aren't doing enough. These are lies the world tells us to keep us moving at a breakneck pace that does nothing but wear us down, our minds, our bodies, our souls. What God showed Elijah this morning, what God shows us this morning is that rest is holy. Giving yourself a break is holy. Taking time away is holy. It doesn't make you weak, it doesn't make you unworthy, it doesn't make you a failure, it doesn't make you imperfect, it makes you human, it makes you who God intended you to be, because if you're constantly running around until you're so exhausted you can't function, how are you going to have any energy left for the kingdom?

If Katie Ledecky had just jumped out of the pool and gone about her daily life, not paid attention to her body's needs, that final swim of the day would have been not only a disaster, but probably damaging to her body. She knew she needed rest and the right kind of snack, and that self-care brought her a gold medal. We aren't out in world competing for gold, but we are working towards making God's kingdom on earth a little bit more like heaven, and that takes work, work that is exhausting and demanding. So, when the world feels too heavy, when your heart has said it has had enough, do yourself a favor, drink a glass of water, grab a snack, and take a nap, and know that in those acts, you are doing holy work. **AMEN!!!**