It’s only August, and I’m already sick of political ads. And we still have almost three months to go! Politicians and their campaign teams are relentless. You cannot and will not be able to hide from their ads. They will find you. Don’t have cable? They will send you ads via streaming services. Don’t watch TV or stream? You will get them in the mail, hear them on the radio, or see them around town. It doesn’t matter where you go or what you do, they will find some way to get you their message.

I am convinced that every political ad has essentially the same message, and that message is the same as Jezebel’s from our reading for today. Something or someone is coming for you. Illegal immigration, high taxes, abortion bans, unrestricted abortions, gun violence, and more. They are all messages of doom, meant to drive you to despair.

It worked on Elijah. He ran for his life, hid his servant in the southern kingdom of Judah, wandered out into the wilderness, and asked God to take his life. Elijah was overwhelmed. He had not received a vague threat; he received a direct threat from the queen herself. She vowed to kill him or else she would die herself. Elijah had just not only defeated her prophets in a battle of the gods, but he had killed them with swords, and she was angry. So angry that she wanted Elijah either gone or dead.

There is an ever-present temptation to despair.

We live in a sinful world, and sometimes it sure does seem like evil is winning. Natural disasters devastate homes and cities. Cancer appears, organs fail, accidents happen, people get addicted, people lie to and hurt each other, hundreds of thousands of unborn babies are killed each year. The world seems to be saturated in so much evil that there is nothing we can do.

Elijah despairs because he thinks he is the only faithful one left. I don’t know about you, but sometimes I feel the same. It feels like the culture around us is so twisted, and everyone is so focused on earthly things and their own desires. I see people that should know better making dumb decisions, so many people just giving up on their faith, and I get so frustrated to the point that I am ready to despair.

It wasn’t Elijah’s fault that the people wouldn’t listen to him. Elijah had done everything that the Lord told him to. He had done amazing and difficult things, things that required complete trust in the Lord, and Elijah had shown that and more. Yet, notice what Elijah says to the Lord. “I am no better than my fathers.” Elijah blames himself for the evil in his land and the unfaithfulness of his people.

That is where Elijah falls. He looks to himself, and when he does, he is driven to despair. If we put our hope in ourselves or in anyone else, despair is all that we will find. That’s the problem with these political ads; they want you to put your hope in a person. They put all the pressure on you. If you don’t vote for this person, then all these things will happen. Something will get you.

Elijah was right to be afraid. The Queen wanted him dead, and she had the tools to make that happen. At times, we too are right to be afraid. The world is full of evil. We need help; Elijah needed help. We don’t need help from ourselves or a politician, it won’t do us any good. The government can only stop evil for a little while. It can only do so much. Laws won’t change hearts, inspire good works, or defeat evil. Laws can only restrain it. We need something far better; we need something else to lift us out of the despair that comes from this sin-sick world. We need someone else. We need a better message.

We need a messenger from God, we need the Word of God incarnate, we need Jesus. He and He alone can lift us up out of despair, and that is exactly what He does. He comes to us in the midst of our despair, and He gives us all that we need. Part of Elijah’s problem was that he had set aside what God had done in the past. The mighty works that God had done through him and to him.

Don’t forget what God has done for you. Don’t forget what God has done to you. God has brought many people back from leaving the church, and He can bring your loved one back too. God has healed many people; Jesus healed the sick, He even raised the dead, He can cure any disease. He can turn even the hardest heart.

If you feel in your despair that God has left you, remember your baptism. Remember the claims that God has made on your life. He has adopted you as His own dearly loved child. He has claimed you as His own. He has taken away your sins. He has promised to never leave you nor forsake you.

If you are tired and weary from the evils of this world, Jesus is here today to give you rest and refreshment. The road is hard, living a Christian life is hard, and you are not strong enough to do it. That’s the first part of leaving despair; admitting that you aren’t strong enough, that you can’t do it alone. What an anti-cultural statement that is, but it’s true we can’t do it on our own. As the words of the hymn go, “I am weak, but Thou art mighty!”

Today in His body and blood, Jesus gives you the strength to carry on. In the very bread of heaven, Jesus gives you everything you need to live this life. He gave Elijah all he needed to survive 40 days and 40 nights in the desert. In the Bible, the number 40 is a preparatory number. God prepares the earth for 40 days and nights in the flood. Jesus prepares Himself for ministry for 40 days and nights in the desert. Elijah too is preparing himself for the final part of his ministry.

We are being prepared each and every day to receive our inheritance here on earth, eternal life. Not only that, but we are preparing each other. I have said it many times that we are not just waiting to die and go to heaven. But part of why the church is here is to prepare you to die. Part of my job as a pastor is to prepare you to die so that you do not approach death in fear and despair. I want you to approach death as a gateway to even more life, a sad thing for sure, but something that has been defeated.

You don’t need to despair over the thought of your death, or the thought of a loved one’s death, because death has been defeated. It may separate us here for a little, but in Christ all things are made new. One day, you and I, and all those who have died in the faith will be made new. Our lowly bodies will be made new like Christ’s heavenly body. One day, as we rest in our graves, we will hear Christ’s voice telling us once again to rise, rise up out of our grave into the gift of eternal life with all those who have fallen asleep in faith.

So, when you see a political ad and your blood starts to boil, when you hear the words of Jezebel, “something is coming for you,” don’t despair. Rise, fill yourself with God’s Word, and go out to the work that He has given you to do in your vocations, trusting that He is with you and He will care for you no matter who is elected.