

The Broom Tree by Lou Ann Mokwa

“Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day’s journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough Lord,” he said. “Take my life, I am no better than my ancestors.” (1 Kings 19: 3-5a, NIV)

Elijah was despondent. In the previous chapter, his public and fervent prayers to God were answered, resulting in a stunning victory. After his plea to God, fire flashed down from heaven burning the evening sacrifice and water-drenched altar on Mt Carmel. The people of Israel were so amazed they fell down on their faces, crying *“The Lord-he is God! The Lord-he is God!”* (1 Kings 18:39 NIV) In the very next verse, Elijah commands that the 850 prophets of Baal and Asheroth be slaughtered. Sounds like a major victory, doesn’t it? The evil tyrant Queen Jezebel sought revenge in defense of pagan worship and the deaths of those prophets. Her seething anger, prompts her to send a threatening message to Elijah (v.2), causing him to flee into the desert. After a day’s travel, he comes upon a *“broom tree.”*

Are you reeling from a recent, unexpected loss? Have you lost a spouse, a child, a sibling, a job, your health or some other circumstance resulting in hopelessness?

Consider for a moment, what God provided to Elijah during his hopeless state...a *“broom tree.”* This dense tree (actually a bush) grows in the desert, with a height of up to twelve feet and has sprawling branches. While leafless, it at times has white blossoms. God created this tree and placed it in just the right place, at the right time for Elijah to seek shelter and find rest beneath it.

Dear sisters, God promises to provide a *“broom tree”* for you as well, a relief from your suffering and pain. Maybe a consoling word from a friend, a good night’s sleep, a comforting verse from the Bible, an encouraging visit with a doctor, an inspirational sermon, a beautiful summer day, all of these are reflections of God’s mercy. It may not come when or where you expect it, but it will happen in God’s timing which is always perfect. Pray to Him, seek shelter with Him in worship, Word and sacrament. You will be reassured by this promise from Jesus: *“...Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything, I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”* (John 16: 22-23 NIV)