

10-25-26

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

John 12:27-32

1 Kings 19:1-15a

INTRO TO JOHN 12:27-32

As Jesus concludes his public ministry, he receives reassurance from God. The voice of God is heard by the crowd so they would believe that he is the one sent by the Holy One.

Listen for God's word to us:

27 “Now I am deeply troubled. What should I say? ‘Father, save me from this time’? No, for this is the reason I have come to this time.

28 Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

29 The crowd standing there heard and said, “It's thunder.” Others said, “An angel spoke to him.”

30 Jesus replied, “This voice wasn't for my benefit but for yours.

31 Now is the time for judgment of this world. Now this world's ruler will be thrown out.

32 When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me.”

INTRO TO 1 KINGS 19:1-16

Under David and Solomon, all of the tribes of Israel were organized into one united kingdom. After Solomon's death, however, the people of the ten northern tribes were fed up with the favor shown the southern tribes. They rebelled and set up their own kingdom, called Israel. The two tribes of the south were called Judah and remained loyal to the line of David. The capital of Israel in the north was Samaria with a shrine for worship. Judah in the south had Jerusalem and the Temple, and the southern kingdom of Judah, with its capital in Jerusalem. Elijah was a prophet in the north during the time of King Ahab and his Phoenician wife Jezebel who worshiped the Baal gods. The people were caught in worshipping both the God of the Israelites and the Baals, while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the Lord.

So Elijah appears on the scene to set up a demonstration of YHWH's superiority over Baal, through a contest to see which god could bring fire to a sacrifice. The Baal prophets go first, setting up a bull on a pile of wood. They are to dance about and call on Baal to burn up this sacrifice. They dance and call and nothing happens. Elijah then has his turn. But before he calls on YHWH he has the bull and wood doused with water 3 times. When he calls on God it all

bursts into flames, leaving nothing but ash. He then kills 450 of the prophets of Baal. But when he learns that Jezebel wants to have him killed, he is so distraught that he runs away and wishes he could just die.

Now from 1 Kings 19 we hear ...

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, how he had killed all Baal's prophets with the sword.

² Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah with this message: "May the gods do whatever they want to me if by this time tomorrow I haven't made your life like the life of one of them."

³ Elijah was terrified. He got up and ran for his life. He arrived at Beer-sheba in Judah and left his assistant there. ⁴ He himself went farther on into the desert a day's journey. He finally sat down under a solitary broom bush. He longed for his own death: "It's more than enough, LORD! Take my life because I'm no better than my ancestors." ⁵ He lay down and slept under the solitary broom bush.

Then suddenly a messenger tapped him and said to him, "Get up! Eat something!" ⁶ Elijah opened his eyes and saw flatbread baked on glowing coals and a jar of water right by his head. He ate and drank, and then went back to sleep. ⁷ The LORD's messenger returned a second time and tapped him. "Get up!" the messenger said. "Eat something, because you have a difficult road ahead of you." ⁸ Elijah got up, ate and drank, and went refreshed by that food for forty days and nights until he arrived at Horeb, God's mountain. ⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night.

The LORD's word came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ Elijah replied, "I've been very passionate for the LORD God of heavenly forces because the Israelites have abandoned your covenant. They have torn down your altars, and they have murdered your prophets with the sword. I'm the only one left, and now they want to take my life too!"

¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand at the mountain before the LORD. The LORD is passing by." A very strong wind tore through the mountains and broke apart the stones before the LORD. But the LORD wasn't in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake. But the LORD wasn't in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake, there was a fire. But the LORD wasn't in the fire. After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his coat. He went out and stood at the cave's entrance. A voice came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ He said, "I've been very passionate for the LORD God of heavenly forces because the Israelites have abandoned your covenant. They have torn down your altars, and they have murdered your prophets with the sword. I'm the only one left, and now they want to take my life too."

¹⁵ The LORD said to him, “Go back through the desert to Damascus and anoint Hazael as king of Aram. ¹⁶ Also anoint Jehu, Nimshi’s son, as king of Israel; and anoint Elisha from Abel-meholah, Shaphat’s son, to succeed you as prophet.

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

May have seen this poster in various forms.

- 2.5 million printed were intended for use.
- To strengthen morale in the event of wartime disaster
- Mass bombings; poisonous gas
- Never was displayed in public.

Part of a series of 3

- Freedom is in peril, defend it with all your might.
- Your courage, Your cheerfulness, Your resolution will bring us victory.

Keep Calm and Carry On rediscovered in 2000

- Poster was in a used bookstore bought at auction.
- Stuart Manley hung it near the cash register at his bookstore.
- Popularity caught on.

Sounds like the phases of Elijah’s prophetic journey.

- Freedom is in peril, defend it with all your might.
- Elijah stepped into the call as God’s prophet.
- Your courage, Your cheerfulness, Your resolution will bring us victory.
- Elijah courageously and faithfully stood for God against the prophets of Baal.
- Keep Calm and Carry On
- God’s message for Elijah in the face of burnout and fear.

We live in a culture of sound and spectacular.

- Blockbuster hits of Hollywood.
- Earbuds permanently imbedded.
- Constant flow of news and commentary.
 - 10 more days of political blasts.

Focusing on the God who comes as

- Thin. Quiet. In today’s CEB
- “sound of sheer silence” NRSV
- “a still small voice” RSV
- “gentle whisper” NIV
- A sermon that writes itself.
- God’s way of getting through to us is not by the spectacular and violent
But quiet; unassuming

- We need to take time out
Dwell in the stillness
- Breathe – as has been an emphasis
- Cause that's how God comes to us.

Professor Richard Nelson, of Perkins School of Theology at SMU

- Argues that finding God in the silence is not the focus; a misreading.
- We jump too quickly to assume that God is meant to be present in the small voice.
- Nothing is said directly about God's presence in the 4th event:

After the fire, there was a sound. Thin. Quiet.

- Just that God was not in the first three.

The actual contrast is between the fireworks of God's theophany and the quiet calm that followed, not between God's presence and absence.

Nelson's interpretation cautions us.

- If we just get quiet God will show up.

An interpretive slant [that] can lead to the very unbiblical notion that the conditions for God's revelation are things that can be anticipated ("God prefers to work in the stillness") or, worse, created by us ("Quiet your hearts, and then you will hear God").

Though we can't ignore that there must be something special about the thin-quiet; sheer silence

- Look at God's response to Elijah's loss of nerve
And the need for Elijah to
Keep Calm and Carry On

After hearing that Jezebel is after his life

- Elijah would rather God kill him now.
- He liked his odds better against 450 prophets of Baal than one woman.
But that's another sermon.

Elijah's perception that he is the only faithful one left is wrong.

"I've been very passionate for the LORD God of heavenly forces because the Israelites have abandoned your covenant. They have torn down your altars, and they have murdered your prophets with the sword. I'm the only one left, and now they want to take my life too."

- States this before the wind, earthquake, fire and then silence.
- But makes the same statement after emerging from the cave to face God.

After the spectacle of God's intervention

- As Baal was proved a hoax

The next thing Elijah heard was the message of Jezebel "Off with his head!"

- He failed to listen for God's voice.
- Thought the entire burden was his alone.
- Failed to acknowledge God's dynamic presence.

The same can happen to us

- When standing up for what is right.
- Being the voice of reason against false claims.
- Going against the flow.

And the next voice we absorb is criticism, threats, or rejection.

- We can huddle in our cave thinking: "I am the only one, and everyone is against me."
- It happens when we fail to listen for God's voice and forget the dynamic presence of God.

When we depend upon God's dynamic presence

- It empowers us to trust in the gifts that come through divine grace.
- Gifts that specialize in making the impossible possible.

Elijah needed to know that God had a life for him beyond the cave.

- Purpose and calling; a mission.
- Knowing that God has a calling, purpose, mission is a gift to each of us.
- The motivation and inspiration to "keep calm and carry on" does not come from posters or within ourselves.
- It comes as a gift from God who comes to us, speaks to us and sends us out with the gifts and talents to usher in God's new day.

BENEDICTION

~ Benedictine Sister Ruth Fox, 1985

May God bless you with
discontent with easy answers, half-truths, superficial relationships, so that you will live from
deep within your heart.

May God bless you with
anger at injustice, oppression, abuse, and exploitation of people, so that you will work for
justice, equality, and peace.

May God bless you with
tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war, so that you will
reach out your hand to comfort them and to change their pain to joy.

May God bless you with
the foolishness to think you can make a difference in this world, so that you will do the things
which others tell you cannot be done.

If you have the courage to accept these blessings, then God will also bless you with

Happiness

- because you will know that you have made life better for others.

Inner peace

- because you will have worked to secure an outer peace for others.

Laughter

- because your heart will be light.

Faithful friends

- because they will recognize your worth as a person.