



Come and See!

August 13, 2017

The Word...

At the mountain of God, Horeb, Elijah came to a cave where he took shelter.
Then the LORD said to him,
"Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD;
the LORD will be passing by."
A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains
and crushing rocks before the LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind.
After the wind there was an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake.
After the earthquake there was fire—but the LORD was not in the fire.
After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.
When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak
and went and stood at the entrance of the cave.
(from 1 Kgs 19:9a, 11-13a)

Pondering the Word...

Winds, earthquakes, fires...we seem to hear about natural disasters like these happening every day somewhere in the world. Technology has greatly improved the developed world's ability to prepare for such events, but there are still times when they catch us off-guard. For the ancients, though, cataclysms were clear signs of the gods' anger and displeasure, and I imagine were just as terrifying then as they are today.

But the prophet Elijah knows something about the one, true God that, like our forefathers in faith, we may not realize. He knows what Moses knew as well. Yes, the drama and destruction demonstrate the power of God's earth, but Elijah realizes God will be most present to him in the still silence after the storm. It is then he can pour his heart out to God and share his fear, anger, and laments. It is then God will provide solace and direction for moving forward. It is then God makes his presence known.

Living the Word...

In spiritual direction, a wise director will encourage the directee to look for God in whatever situation is confronting them. This passage from Kings is, of course, a good one to help someone facing a crisis. But it doesn't have to be crises on the magnitude of earthquakes and fires. It's a good habit to use this technique of looking for God every day so that we recognize God's constant presence in our lives. Sure, it's easy to find and praise God in the beauty of nature, in the birth of a child, in a joyous family celebration. But we often don't take the time to look for God or God's message to us in failure, in conflict, in the ordinary.

Challenge yourself this week. Commit to paying attention to the tiny whispering sounds of the Spirit as you go about your day. Stop for 60 seconds a few times each day (put a reminder on your phone if you need to), and in the evening to take a good look at your day (that's the Examen exercise we talk about.) I promise you, the more you do this, the more you will become actively aware of God's presence in your life. These short "bursts" of silence and reflection will strengthen you, teach you, and give you comfort to move ahead. And don't think you need to be like Elijah and hide behind a cloak of unworthiness. God longs to see your face.

Personal Reflections and Ideas: _____

Aug 14: *"Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were overwhelmed with grief. (Mt 17:22-27)*

Have you ever known someone with a terminal illness who continued to be involved and enthusiastic about their life and their call? I have and it's a remarkable thing to witness. Jesus does this same sort of thing for the disciples. For the second time, he predicts his passion and death, and this time his friends are "overwhelmed with grief." But Jesus doesn't let them grieve for long. They are right back on the road to Jerusalem, teaching and healing and blessing those they meet along the way. Perhaps you are faced with difficulty or illness. It is understandable and wise for you to grieve for a while. But remember, you follow Jesus, a man with a mission. He is with you on the journey, to teach, bless, and heal. Have faith.

Aug 15: *The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God. (Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab)*

This apocalyptic vision in Revelation is horrible to imagine. The woman, struggling through painful labor, faces an impossible situation. There is no way she will be able to shield her child from the evil that awaits. She HAS to trust in God; there is no other choice. So she does and God provides, not only for her child, but for her as well. God leads her into the quiet of the desert where she can rest. As parents, we also can't protect our children from every the evil in the world. We can nurture and prepare them, but we too need to trust in God to protect them. And it's wise to take God up on the offer he extends to us as well: "Come away to a quiet place. Be with me and rest."

Aug 16: *"If your brother sins against you go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won over your brother." (Mt 18:15-20)*

Most people don't like conflict. We avoid confrontation, choosing instead to stew over hurt or injustice. Or we get others involved as go-betweens which can muddy the waters even more. Jesus' advice is sound. Sit down and talk. Tell each other what you are thinking and feeling. Try to resolve the issue between the two of you. Conflict involves at least two sides so it's good to consider that you might share some responsibility as well. Consider times in the past when you have hurt another. Extend the olive branch. If forgiveness is not asked for or is rejected, forgive anyway. Don't let anger fester in your heart.

Aug 17: *"This is how you will know that there is a living God in your midst, who at your approach will dispossess the Canaanites." (Jos 3:7-10a, 11, 13-17)*

I get uncomfortable when I read a passage like this, where God is showing his presence by knocking another nation out of the picture. It's good to remember this was the modus operandi for gods back in those days. And if I'm honest, there have been times in my past when I have derived quiet but unholy satisfaction out of "winning" over someone else. The last thing we want to do is to assume the living God is present in our lives through the loss or failure of another, and yet we see that all the time, particularly in politics and religion. These days, I try to make a habit of looking for the living God in all that is good and positive in the world and in the lives of those around me, even those whose outlook differs from mine. How do you recognize the presence of the living God in your life?

Aug 18: *"I drove (your enemies) out; it was not your sword or your bow. I gave you land you had not tilled and cities you had not built, to dwell in; you have eaten of vineyards and olive groves you did not plant." (Jos 24: 1-13)*

Being self-sufficient is a valued and important trait. Our self-esteem comes partly from our ability to do for ourselves, to use our God-given talents to better life for ourselves and others. But our self-esteem also comes from knowing we are beloved children of God, so just as important is gratitude for the times God has done all the work and carried us through. Reflect today on those times. Say a heartfelt prayer of thanks.

Aug 19: *"He is a jealous God who will not forgive your transgressions or your sins." (Jos 24:14-29)*

Here's another one of those Old Testament passages that tends to stick around and causes people to think they are lost causes. But if we really think that, we totally miss the point of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. With Christ, nothing...nothing is death-dealing, nothing is unforgivable. Return and live.