

Sermon followed by Service

July 9, 2023

1 Kings 19:9 -

If you want somebody's attention, you have a choice - you can shout or you can whisper. But if you want to talk love, shouting at them isn't the best way to hug someone's heart, is it? To talk love, a whisper can be the better way to go. Today we hear God's whisper.

But first a bitey growl. We go back to June 18; it feels like yesterday, doesn't it? Elijah and the LORD face off against the Ahab and the prophets of Baal. Elijah lays down his challenge. "You set your altar for Baal; I'll set my altar for the LORD. Whoever answers by fire - he is God!" So the prophets of Baal call and dance and cut themselves, but no fire. Elijah calls on the LORD, and the LORD answers with a fire that burned up his offering and the altar and the water Elijah had poured all over it. God's people saw what they needed to see; they heard what they needed to hear; they get off their fence; they bow to the ground and cry: "**The LORD - He is God! The LORD - He is God.**" But Elijah's not done. First, he looks to put the nail in the coffin of Baal worship; he orders the prophets of Baal killed, and the people obey. Then Elijah prays for rain, and God answers. For Elijah, it was win, win, win, and he runs like the wind with the power of the LORD. Wow!

But then what happens? Ahab tells Jezebel what happened, and Jezebel's not one to sit and sulk. She sends a messenger to Elijah with a message of death: "**May the gods deal with me, be**

it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of the dead prophets of Baal. Elijah was riding high, but now his bubble bursts. Ahab still looked to Jezebel, and Jezebel still had it out for Elijah. Elijah feels crushed. The victory that the LORD had worked didn't matter. The cheer of the people - "the LORD, he is God" - didn't matter. The rain in answer to his prayer didn't matter. Elijah's bubble burst, and so nothing else mattered. He feels like all is lost, and instead of running with the LORD, he runs away in fear, finally ending up at Horeb, the mountain of God, Mount Sinai.

That is where our lesson begins. The LORD asks Elijah, **"What are you doing here?"** Elijah answers, **"I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me."** How did Elijah sound? Feeling a bit sorry for himself, wasn't he? He had worked hard for the LORD, sacrificed years of his life, put his life on the line for the LORD. He had preached and warned and pointed his people to the true God. Elijah figured he had done his part, but he doesn't see the results he thought he should be seeing. Sure, Elijah had done his part, but it seems he doesn't remember any of the good God had done or see any of the good God was doing. Instead, all he saw was what was going wrong. The people wrong; Ahab and Jezebel wrong. God wrong. God wrong for not working the results, for not giving Elijah the results that Elijah thought he should be seeing. Elijah seems to be saying: "God, I've done my part. What about you doing your part? How long are you going to let them get away with what they're

doing?” Elijah wanted results. He expected that by this time God would have stepped in and “made some changes.”

Sound familiar? I think we’ve all been there, haven’t we?

The LORD answered: **“Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”** Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the 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 came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.”

Wind, earthquakes, and fire are all tools in God’s toolbox, weapons God can use to make changes and get results. And he uses them - to get our attention, to test faith, to judge unbelief, to show that we live in a world of sin and death. Make no mistake, God can and does use windstorms, earthquakes, and fire. But to warm cold hearts, to make dead hearts alive, to bring peace to troubled hearts, what does God use? What is God’s tool to create faith and love? **God’s Gentle Whisper.**

What is that gentle whisper? You’ve heard it. It’s the whisper of God’s love -- the gospel. When we feel all alone, God whispers in his word, “I’m here for you.” When we feel guilty, he whispers in his word, “I forgive you.” When we feel worthless, he whispers in baptism: “You are my son, my daughter

whom I love, with you I am well-pleased.” When we feel hopeless, he whispers, “Think Easter - Jesus is alive and because he lives you will live.” When we feel at the end of our rope, he whispers, “Don’t give up; my promise is true. Don’t give up; my heaven is for you.” God’s whisper is full of promise; God’s whisper is full of Jesus. **“God so loved the world, that he sent his only and only son. Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.”** That whisper is God’s power to change hearts; it’s God’s gospel power to save.

But sometimes we forget that. Sometimes we are like Elijah. We tell, we teach, we warn, we scold, we invite to church, and we want to see results. And when we don’t see the results we want, we might feel like giving up -- like Elijah. And maybe, like Elijah, we might wish God would send some sign or give a kick - to make people pay attention, to make people obey, to make people believe.

Then we need to remember God’s lesson for Elijah. **The Gentle Whisper** of the Gospel. **The Gentle Whisper** that changed our heart is God’s power to change other hearts. **The Gentle Whisper** of the gospel that saved us is God’s power to save others.

Remember that whisper in your family. Some days it might seem that you teach and warn and scold all day long and it doesn’t seem to do any good. On those days, it can be tempting to take the easy way out, to rely on fire and thunder and ice to line the family back into shape. Fire and thunder might get

attention, but the gentle whisper of the gospel is what changes hearts. So, yes, there might be times to thunder and scold, but don't forget the gentle whisper of God's love. Scolding, grounding, punishing can teach the consequences of sin; they can help teach children to stay out of trouble. But only the gentle whisper of God's love can change cold hearts to love. Only the gentle whisper of God's love can make rebellious hearts want to obey and want to listen and want to love. Only the gentle whisper of God can make fearful hearts into trusting, giving hearts.

Remember that when you look at the sin and unbelief in our society. What do we do about our world cheering abortion and homosexuality? What do we do about our world cheering sin? We could go to war and meet protest with protest. But what would that accomplish? More hate. We could spend our time and energy trying to write new laws. But what would that accomplish? Would that really accomplish our goals? It might curb some sins; it might curb some hearts from doing this wrong or that wrong, but would it change hearts from being wrong? The only real and lasting way to fight the sins of society is to change hearts. Laws can't and laws won't change hearts; the only way to change hearts is with the gentle whisper of the gospel.

Remember that for yourselves. When we wish that God would take action and strike down the sinner, remember we have been that sinner. God's ripping wind; his earth-shaking anger; his burning fire - that's what we all deserve. It's what we deserve for being like the Israelites following the ways of the world

instead of the ways of God. It's what we deserve for being like Elijah, giving up on God's Word and feeling sorry for ourselves because God doesn't do things the way we want.

But God still comes to us with his gentle whisper - whispering, "Your sins are forgiven." Whispering, "I will never quit on you; I will never leave you." Whispering with a smile on his face, "I still love you."

God gave Elijah his gentle whisper. Then he sent Elijah back to work. But first he told him, "**I reserve seven thousand in Israel -- all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.**" Elijah had wanted to see results. And God had worked his results. We want to see results when we tell and teach and invite to church. And God will work his results. If we get to see them, great - thank God. If we don't get to see them, we don't need to do a scowling Elijah. We can know this - just as God did his work in Elijah's day, God will work his saving work today. And God will get his results.

So whisper. Whisper God's whisper of love and forgiveness. Whisper God's whisper of peace and hope. Whisper God's whisper and you can be sure God will whisper and work right there with you. Amen.

July 8 & 9, 2023

SERVICE OF THE WORD

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we can feel overwhelmed and “at the end of our rope.”

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see Elijah overwhelmed and ready to give up. What did God have for him? What does God have for us when we are feeling overwhelmed and ready to give up?

OPENING HYMN

“If God Himself Be for Me”

Hymn 819 vs. 1, 2, 5, & 6

If God himself be for me, I may a host defy;
for when I pray, before me my foes, confounded, fly.
If Christ, my head and master, befriend me from above,
what foe or what disaster can drive me from his love?

This I believe, yea rather, of this I make my boast,
that God is my dear Father, the friend who loves me most,
and that, whate’er betide me, my Savior is at hand
thro’ stormy seas to guide me and bring me safe to land.

Now no one can condemn me or set my hope aside;
now hell no more can claim me, its fury I deride.
No sentence now reproves me, no guilt destroys my peace,
for Christ, my Savior, loves me and shields me with his grace.

No danger, thirst, or hunger, no pain or poverty,
no earthly tyrant’s anger shall ever vanquish me.
Though earth should break asunder, you are my Savior true;
no fire or sword or thunder shall sever me from you.

INVOCATION

M: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

+ CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION +

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

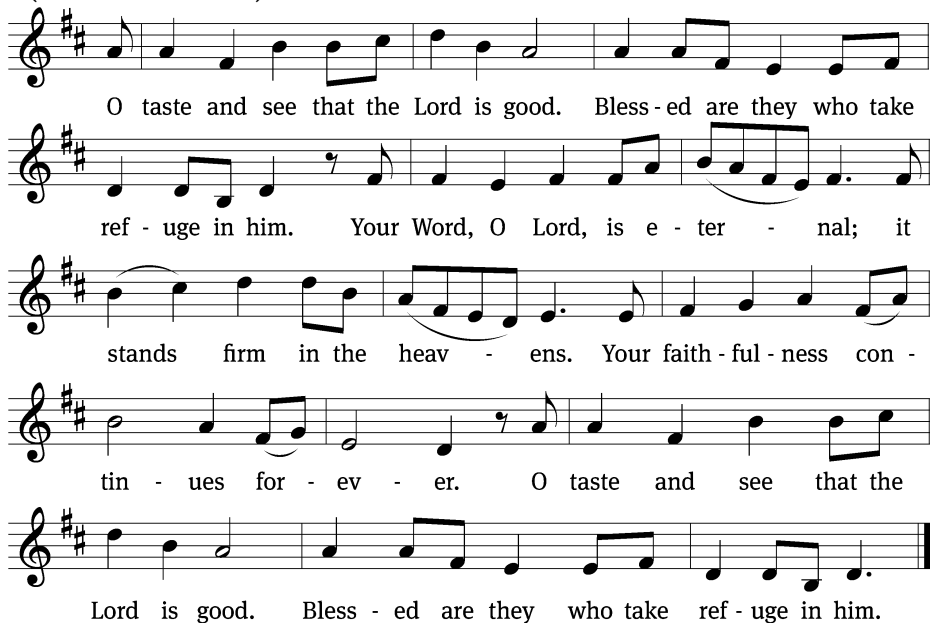
M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will. **Amen.**

+ PRAYER AND PRAISE +

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

HYMN (No Introduction)

"O Taste and See"



O taste and see that the Lord is good. Bless-ed are they who take
ref - uge in him. Your Word, O Lord, is e - ter - nal; it
stands firm in the heav - ens. Your faith - ful - ness con -
tin - ues for - ev - er. O taste and see that the
Lord is good. Bless - ed are they who take ref - uge in him.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord God, you know that we are surrounded by many dangers and often stumble and fall. Strengthen us in body and mind, and bring us safely through all temptations; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING

1 Kings 19:1–19

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”

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 wilderness. He came to a broom bush, 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.” Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

And the word of the LORD came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the 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 came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

He replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel — all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him.

Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 73B

Sure-ly, it is God who saves me, I will trust in him and
not be a - fraid, for the LORD is my strong-hold and my

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of text, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line of text. The notes are simple, with some rests and a dotted note.

sure de-fense, and he will be my Sav - ior.

I am always / with you;
 you hold me by my / right hand.
 You guide me with your / counsel,
 and afterward you will take me into / glory.
 Whom have I in / heav'n but you?
 And earth has nothing I desire be- / sides you.
 My flesh and my / heart may fail,
 but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for- / ever.
Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. Refrain

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mark 9:24

Alleluia. I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief! Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Matthew 14:22–33

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

“Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”
“Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

“Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me”

Hymn 849

Lord, take my hand and lead me upon life’s way;
direct, protect, and feed me from day to day.
Without your grace and favor I go astray;
so take my hand, O Savior, and lead the way.

Lord, when the tempest rages, I need not fear;
for you, the Rock of Ages, are always near.
Close by your side abiding, I fear no foe,
for when your hand is guiding, in peace I go.

Lord, when the shadows lengthen and night has come,
I know that you will strengthen my steps toward home.
Then nothing can impede me, O blessèd Friend;
so take my hand and lead me unto the end.

SERMON

HYMN

"All Is Well"

Hymn 802

The sun beams on behind the clouds and in the dark still grace abounds;
all is well because of God's great love.
The road of disappointment runs where unseen mercies wait for us,
and all is well because of God's great love.
How brightly shines the love of the Father in our Savior, Jesus Christ.
With faithful hands he fulfills ev'ry promise; he will never leave our side.

He feels our weakness, knows our need, and for our good he intercedes;
all is well because of God's great love.
Through ev'ry failure, ev'ry fear, the Lord of comfort draws us near,
and all is well because of God's great love.
How brightly shines the love of the Father in our Savior, Jesus Christ.
With faithful hands he fulfills ev'ry promise; he will never leave our side.

His coming soon will fill the sky and all that's wrong will be made right;
with newborn eyes we will behold the glory of the risen Lord.
All will be well because of God's great love;
yes, all is well because of God's great love.
How brightly shines the love of the Father in our Savior, Jesus Christ.
With faithful hands he fulfills ev'ry promise; he will never leave our side.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: Lord God, our maker and preserver, we praise and thank you for all that you give us day after day.

C: **We are not worthy of all the mercies you show us.**

M: You have given us your precious Word to nourish our souls and to protect us from the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature.

C: **We thank you for those who teach and preach your saving truth at this place and everywhere. Grant them a rich measure of patience, wisdom, and love.**

M: Heavenly Father, we pray that you shield us from every kind of danger: sudden catastrophe, terrors of crime, and the pain of disease. Watch over those who travel by land, sea, and air. Keep our loved ones from whatever perils may threaten them.

C: **Heal those who are sick, cheer those who are sad, calm those who are distressed, and comfort all who are old and infirm.**

M: Bless our land, our people, and those who hold offices of high trust. Keep our government and schools upright and strong for the advancement of good citizenship and useful vocations, that we may enjoy your gifts of peace, security, and well-being.

C: **Grant your blessing to every nation on earth. Where there are wars, may there be peace. Where there is hatred, let it be healed. Where there is poverty, danger, or disaster, come with your almighty power to help and restore.**

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring to you our private petitions.

Silent prayer.

M: We bring these requests before you in the name of Jesus our Lord, and ask you to hear us. Take all that we have, our bodies and minds, our time and skills, our ministries and offerings, and use them to your glory.

C: **We give ourselves to you that we may serve you in whatever way is pleasing in your sight. Amen.**

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Congregation President | Steve Lemerand* |
| Secretary | Charles Ledvina |
| Outreach Elder | Nic Holter* |
| Youth Ministry Elder | Paul Massey |
| Worship Elder | Tim Kalter* |
| Adult Ministry Elder | Phil Garberding |
| Congregation Treasurer | Jim Thies* |
| School Board Chairman | Joe Lofsness* |
| School Finance | Ray Linnemann |
| School Recruitment | Peter Kolch* |
| Parent Relations | Greg Haak |

* Elected to a new term

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

M: O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

M: Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another.
Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“Dear Lord, to Your True Servants Give”

Hymn 896

Dear Lord, to your true servants give the grace to you alone to live.
Set free from sin to serve you, Lord, they go to share your living Word,
the gospel message to proclaim that all may know your saving name.

They gladly go at your command to spread your Word o’er sea and land.
Be with them, Lord, and make them strong
to heal sin’s ills, to right the wrong.
Your rule is over wind and wave, and mighty is your arm to save.

When all their labor seems in vain, revive their sinking hopes again;
and when success crowns what they do,
O keep them humble, Lord, and true
until before your judgment seat they lay their trophies at your feet.

OFFERING

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