

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost - Year A

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

I Kings 19:9-18

Psalms 85:8-13

Romans 10:5-15

Matthew 14:22-33

08/13/2023

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew:

22[Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee], while he dismissed the crowds.23And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. 25And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. 26But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. 27But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." 28Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." 29He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

The Gospel of Our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Silence

Good morning! Our Gospel lesson is fantastic, a truly great story. The artwork surrounding it is especially great. But... our first reading from I Kings is a personal favorite of mine. **I** think it's even better. So that's where we will focus our attention today.

In order to appreciate it I think we need to know a few things. Elijah travels to Mt. Horeb while he is literally on the run. It's his Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid flight from the authorities. All his friends have been killed and he's fairly certain that he's the next, and possibly last name on the list. The Israelites have given up on God, and Elijah feels lost, abandoned, and like he has failed at his job as a prophet. He has been fleeing for a while, and is likely exhausted and at his wit's end. His mind, racing non-stop with "what-ifs" and distractions keeps him from focusing on anything else than survival and prevents him from any sort of real rest. And into this chaos God calls to Elijah: *"Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."*¹ And this is the part I absolutely love: *"Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹²and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence."*² God

¹ I Kings 19:11 NRSV

² I Kings 19:11b-12 NRSV

doesn't come in the great wind. God doesn't come in the earthquake. God doesn't even show up in a fire. God shows up after the "*sound of sheer silence.*" It's only when everything is calm that Elijah can hear God.

As many of you know, I have ADHD, and for the last two weeks, due to a national shortage, I haven't had my medication. I know exactly what the chaos of Elijah's brain was before that experience on the mountain. This is exactly why silence and meditation is such an important discipline for me. My mind is ALWAYS running, and anyone who's talked to me knows I never shut up. Just ask Megan or Sue. It is precisely because I have such a tough time that I think meditation and silence is so important in our faith lives.

So here is what we're going to do. When I'm done we're going to spend 10 minutes in silence. If that's something you can't do, I understand if you want to step out. Now I've done this in the past, but I figured I would give a few extra tips this time. While you can certainly pray if you want, the goal here is to be still. It is super easy to be distracted, so a good tip is to pay attention to your breathing. It will let you focus on the now. And when you drift off, remember that it's ok! Give yourself grace and come back to the present. Focus on the breathing again, or whatever you can do to stay in the moment. This is a discipline that goes back thousands of years in Christianity, and I hope that you can come to appreciate it as much as I do. After ten minutes I'll end with a prayer.
Amen.