

Today's readings are wonderful accounts of God's power and might.

For those of you who are not familiar with Elijah's story, let me give you some context and background.

The story of Elijah begins in 1 Kings 17.

He was the first of a long line of prophets sent by God to the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, to turn the people from their idolatry and wickedness back to God.

They were in a moral and spiritual decline.

For 300 yrs, both men and women were prophets and fulfilled a vital role in encouraging the people and leaders to return to God.

In Hebrew the name Elijah means 'My God is Yahweh'; which is the name of God revealed to Moses.

Scripture does not tell us much about Elijah before his confrontation with King Ahab.

King Ahab and his wife Jezebel worshipped Baal, the Canaanite god responsible for rain, thunder, lightning and dew. They had built a temple for Baal and brought a large entourage of priests and prophets of Baal and Asherah into the country.

Elijah warns Ahab that because he and Jezebel have 'done evil in the sight of God', there will be a drought so severe that not even dew will form. It will last years until God says otherwise.

After this, God directs Elijah's next step to the Kerith Ravine, and then on to a widow and her son in Zarephath. A Gentile city.

There are some amazing and miraculous events in these chapters...

Of being fed by ravens (unclean bird); a never-ending supply of flour and oil; the raising of a dead child; being ministered to by an angel.

And the very dramatic showdown between him and all the prophets and priests of Baal and Asherah, on Mount Carmel. Ultimately ending the drought in a spectacular way when God flashed fire from heaven.

After this astonishing demonstration of God's mighty power, Jezebel was furious and threatened to kill Elijah.

He ran. About 80 miles south to Beersheba

At this point, just before our scripture reading today, Elijah is frightened, exhausted and depressed. He feels isolated and discouraged. He wants to give up and die!

This is where an angel comes to minister to him. Making sure he rests and eats.

It is a great reminder to those of us who are so very busy there is hardly time to draw a breath.

We need rest. God created us to be restored by rest and food.

Let's remember to do this. Even when it seems like there is too much to do.

After 40 days and 40 nights (200 miles) of travelling, Elijah reached Mt Horeb. Also known as Mt Sinai.

A sacred place, where Moses received the 10 commandments.

He rested in a cave.

Except it is probably THE cave.

The cave, or cleft where Moses stood during his vision of God. Where God covered him with His hand. Exodus 33 v22

Our passage today opened with Elijah being confronted by the word of God.  
'Why are you here Elijah?'

Even though God knew the answer, he gave Elijah the opportunity to unburden his heart and speak freely. To get it all off his chest. He had had enough. Elijah felt isolated and alone.

God wants us to do the same.

He desires our honesty and frankness. He can take our fury, sadness and disappointment. Our unbelief and fear.

In the depths of despair, Elijah needed a spiritual renewal.  
And God gave him what he needed. A personal encounter with God.

The first, a great wind that tore the mountain apart and split the boulders probably resonated with Elijah. His whole life was in a storm. But God wasn't in the storm.  
Secondly, a great earthquake that shook the ground. He may have liked the drama of it. But God wasn't in it.

Thirdly the great fire. Elijah had called down fire from heaven on Mt Carmel to burn the drenched sacrifice. But God was not in the fire.

Some may look for God in the dramatic and flamboyant.

But God doesn't shout. He is not aggressive and strident. He is gentle and kind.  
He is more likely to stand quietly and wait patiently until we turn to him.

God had showed Elijah where he was not. Then...

After the fire, 'a gentle whisper' NIV.

God met Elijah in the quiet whisper of a voice, instead of the earth-shaking phenomenon that had gone before.

Elijah must have sensed that God was present in that still small voice because wrapping his face in his mantle showed he was humbling himself in the presence of God.

Then the same question from God.

And God's response was more work to do. Direction The bigger picture.

And, also, the assurance that Elijah needed.

He was not alone. There were, in fact 7,000 faithful souls.

We are not alone. Never.

And our faithful God has promised to never leave us on our own.

'For the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave nor forsake you' Deut 31v6,8.

Josh 1v5. Hebrews 13v5.

When things seem impossible, and we feel isolated and alone we need to cry out to God.  
There are people in this church family who would love to pray with you, if that is how you are feeling. Our prayer corner is for anyone who needs to know they are not alone.

You do not need to give details or explanations.

And you do not need to feel alone.

Isaiah 30 v18 says 'For the Lord is a Faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for his help.'

What has God said to us today?

Let's recap what I have been sharing with you this morning.

Our scriptures today tell us that Our Saviour can be found in the quiet.

He is not loud and forceful.

Zechariah 4 v6 '.. not by might nor by power, but by my spirit,' says the Lord Almighty'.

He rescues us when we call out to him.

On that rough, turbulent Sea of Galilee Jesus walked quietly, on the water to his disciples who were frightened.

Our fears and doubts do not diminish God's mighty power.

Our faith may give out but there is a strong hand to rescue us. Always.

He is our hope, our strength and shield.

Father, thank you that no matter however weak, feeble, or alone we may feel, you are with us. You are mighty to save.

Amen

**Gilly Robinson**