

**Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

<sup>9</sup> 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?”

<sup>10</sup> He replied, “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 too.”

<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> 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?” <sup>14</sup> He replied, “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 too.”

<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.” **This is God’s Word.**

**Dear Friends,**

Elijah’s life as one of God’s prophets was anything but dull. He prophesied during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. They were wicked people and introduced Baal worship to the Children of Israel. This was not a good time in the history of God’s people and so Elijah’s message was often one of judgment.

God used Elijah to announce a drought in the land that would last 3 ½ years and then God provided protection and food for his prophet. First in the Kerith Ravine where a brook provided water and God sent ravens with food and then, after the brook dried up, God sent Elijah to the widow of Zarephath where God kept the oil jar and flour bin supplied with enough to feed the widow, her son and Elijah. Even when the widow’s son died, God heard and answered Elijah’s prayer to restore the boy to life.

More recently, he had been in a showdown between the prophets of Baal and God. Of course God had won and all the prophets of Baal were put to death. Rain came on the land and Elijah thought the king and the people would repent and turn to God. But that didn’t happen.

Instead Queen Jezebel vowed to kill Elijah as soon as she could put her hands on him and so he had to flee for his life. He headed south and you might remember his lament under the broom

tree in the wilderness where in frustration he wondered why he should continue and asked God to take his life now. But God sent an angel with food and encouragement to sleep for he had a long journey ahead of him. After Elijah was refreshed by this angel, he spent 40 days journeying to Mount Horeb and that brings us to our sermon text today.

As we consider this portion of scripture, God could ask us the same question he asked Elijah, **“What are you doing here?”** Our answer could be similar to Elijah’s, **“I’ve come because I am frustrated or tired or afraid.”** **“I’ve come because I need your direction and renewal and encouragement.”**

**I.** Elijah went to Mt Horeb which we think is another name for Mt Sinai. It is far south of Israel and closer to Egypt than Israel. There Elijah has a conversation with God.

God starts the conversation by asking, **“What are you doing here, Elijah?”** And Elijah’s answer, **“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 too.”**

There it is. Frustration and fear. There is no doubt that Elijah had been diligent in serving the Lord. He had done everything God had asked him to do and he had witnessed God’s miraculous power and miracles a number of times. After God’s display of power on Mt Carmel, Elijah had high hopes for the King and the people but his hopes were dashed as wickedness still prevailed and Elijah felt all alone. He thought he was the only faithful person left and the people had all turned against him.

God knew exactly what Elijah needed. **“<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.**

Was Elijah looking for God to bring judgment on King Ahab and Israel? God had in the past and would in the future but that was not what Elijah needed to see and so God was not in the wind nor the earthquake nor the fire – all things that can be signs of judgment. God came in a gentle whisper instead. A gentle whisper – what a calming way to come to Elijah.

Elijah heard the gentle whisper and yet he knew he was sinful and no sinful person could see God and live so he covered his face as he stood at the mouth of the cave. He needed to hear this gentle whisper and let it calm his heart and bring him peace and encouragement.

**Application:** Like Elijah, we have had good times and we have had frustrating times or circumstances that have tired us out physically and mentally. Maybe we have had times where we have been afraid of what might come next or wondered how are we going to survive. At times, we too, have cried out to God in frustration, fear or anxiety. The question that God asked Elijah is a good question for us to consider as well, **“What am I doing here in church today or**

**gathered together with us online?”** The answer is simple. I have come to hear your gentle whisper Lord.

I need to hear you speak to me in a kind way. I know I am sinful and I need to hear your words of love that my sins are forgiven – that you have taken the suffering I deserve on yourself and through faith you have brought me your righteousness.

I need to hear your whisper that you are always with me – that even when I am feeling lonely, I am never alone.

I need to hear your whisper that you will work everything out for my good, especially when I am struggling with the challenges of life – whether it be job, school, finances, relationships or health. I need to hear you whisper to me that you will give me strength to move forward in life and that you will carry me when I am weak. That is why I am here today, Lord – to listen to you and to be refreshed by you and to find encouragement and direction from you. The Lord gives us just that as he speaks to us through his Word. He knows what we need and he provides it just as he did with Elijah.

**II. Once again the Lord asked, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” <sup>14</sup> He replied, “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 too.”**

**<sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. <sup>17</sup> 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.**

Once again, the Lord asked Elijah to think about his situation and what he was doing. He then gave Elijah a task:

1. Go to the land north of Israel – to Aram – and anoint Hazael to be king over Aram. God would use these people to be a murderous thorn in Israel’s side bringing God’s judgment on his people as long as they continued in their wickedness.
2. Next he was to anoint Israel’s next king who would end the reign of Ahab and Jezebel and he too would bring judgment on Israel.
3. Finally he was to anoint Elisha as his successor.

We might think that we are going to see God’s wrath, especially in appointing these kings to bring judgment on his people but actually this is part of God calling his people to repentance. The people would see the failure of the Baals and would give an ear to the prophets of God. You see, sometimes turmoil is needed so that the people are eager for the peace of God’s grace.

The God had some words of encouragement for Elijah, **“Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.”** He was not alone. There were 7000 that had listened to the teaching of the Lord and that had remained faithful. The Lord knows the heart of his people and even though these folks weren't apparent to Elijah they were still there and the preaching of Elijah and the other prophets of God had not been in vain.

**Application:** There is turmoil all around us and we may be frustrated but that encourages us to seek God's peace and grace and it can provide opportunities for us to share the grace of God with others so that they can know the peace and mercy that God provides.

God wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He sent his Son into the world because he loves the world and freely gives us the gift of faith so that we can receive forgiveness for our sins. We are weak and don't deserve anything from God except for his wrath for our sins but instead of wrath God brings us forgiveness, encouragement and direction.

We have been saved to serve and so, with a thankful heart, we look to God's Word to guide us and bring us opportunities to serve – whether that be in our prayer life, by caring for our children and grandchildren, by helping others, by extending an invitation to someone to come and hear about Jesus, or by serving in the church in some other way. There are plenty of opportunities that the Lord has prepared for us.

**Why are you here today?** To lay my frustrations, fears and anxiety at the Lords feet and to let him whisper to me words of forgiveness, encouragement and mercy which will renew and refresh me for another week. I am here so that the Lord can lift me up and bring me the joy of salvation. Amen.