

# Making Space for God

## Paying Attention to Our Inner World

### Opening Prayer-

*O Lord, you have ordered this wonderful world and you know all things in earth and heaven: So fill our hearts with trust in you that by night and day, at all times and in all seasons, we may without fear commit all that we have and hope to be to your never-failing love, for this life and the life to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*From The Book of Worship*

### Looking Back

Take some time to settle yourself. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you quiet your mind. Review your calendar and journal for the past two months.

- List the people, projects, and events that have occupied your time.
- What Make a detailed list of what you are thankful for?
- When did you sense that Jesus was present to you?
- When did he seem distant or you seem distant from him?
- Note any life lessons or themes that have surfaced for you in this time. Offer that up to Jesus.
- Rest or walk if you need to.

### Scripture Study- 1 Kings 19

#### Elijah Flees to Horeb

<sup>1</sup> Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> 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."

<sup>3</sup> Elijah was afraid and ran for his life<sup>1</sup>. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup> while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, 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." <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." <sup>6</sup> He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals<sup>2</sup>, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.



*Elijah by Daniela da Volterra 1509-1566*

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew reads: Elijah saw and went.

<sup>2</sup> Note Isaiah 6:6. That is the only other place in scripture where this Hebrew word for hot coals is used.

<sup>7</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> There he went into a cave and spent the night.

### **The LORD Appears to Elijah**

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>3</sup> <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."



*Elijah Under the Broom Tree, Watercolor by Steve Stuckey  
2010*

## **Reflective Questions**

1. What do you learn about Jezebel in this passage? Who is she like?
2. What kind of person is Ahab? What is his relationship with Jezebel like? See 1 Kings 21:1-14
3. Elijah leaves Israel and travels 120 miles to Beersheba in southern Judah. Put yourself in his place and discuss the variety of emotions he might be feeling?

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<sup>3</sup> Note Genesis 3:8

4. Elijah says, "I have had enough, take my life." Who else in scripture might have said the same thing? When have you felt that way?
5. How does the Lord minister to Elijah under the broom tree?
6. What do you learn about prayer in this passage?
7. *Earth, wind and fire versus still small voice.* Compare and contrast.
8. What role does silence play in your life?

## Reading for Reflection

God never dynamites his (or her) way into our world as an overpowering superstar who takes your life by storm. God still enters the world in the same way as Christ did, as the result of a special gestation process that produces a baby that must then be picked up, nurtured, and coaxed into adulthood. Hence the birth and presence of God in our world depends, at least within the dynamics of the incarnation, upon a certain human consent and cooperation.

*Ronald Rolheiser, Against an Infinite Horizon, page 189*

Ordinary ground is holy. There is more than enough mystery, secret, and miracle ablaze in ordinary reality. Unfortunately, most of the time we do not see this because we stand before it trying to claim, name, number, psyche out, and render familiar—when our true task is, instead, to ponder and to wonder. This is an irreverence that fatigues the soul. Irreverence lies at the root of all sin, and taking for granted lies at the root of all irreverence.

*Ronald Rolheiser, Against an Infinite Horizon, page 223*

Elijah's ups and downs in this story not only symbolize his own authority as a prophet, but also suggest the character of the God he serves. Yahweh is high and lifted up, exalted above the heavens, but he also comes down, and in this he shows his superiority to all idols. God is not only higher than all the gods of the nations, he is lower than all the other gods, descending deeper into the darkness than Tartarus or Hades can imagine. He does not simply throw fireballs from the safety of heaven, but he draws near, gets in our face, confronts kings with annoying prophets who interrupt their lives and plans. Yahweh refuses politely to recluse himself from human affairs. For many people, this is unbecoming to a god. Any decent, sophisticated god will remain where he belongs, in blissful heavenly repose, and have the decency not to meddle with our checkbooks, our marriages, our use of natural resources, our treatment of the poor. He will express no opinion on these subjects. But the God of Israel refuses to stay put. The God of Elijah, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the Father of Jesus Christ, is the God who comes down in the man of God and in the fire of God, in word and judgment, in flesh, in bread and in wine. Ascension is a demonstration of divine power; but so is, even more, incarnation.

*Peter Leithart in Brazos Theological Commentary of 1 & 2 Kings, Page 169*

We who serve an entirely indoor God have lost a great part of our faith. We must break through the cold hard walls of our institutionalized worship and reach for the soft, warm reality of God that is found in out of doors. It is impossible to imprison God within the walls of church and yet claim that Christianity brings light, growth, and life. We need to open the windows of our soul to admit God's creative energy... A supersized God makes us aware of our smallness and our humble place in the

universe. But in order to see him, we must give up our addiction to electronic media. Once we have seen the God of Yosemite and the Everglades, we will be better able to celebrate his awesome reality and our hearts will overflow with praise. Cognizant of God's majesty, we will subsequently and spontaneously confess our need.

*Calvin Miller in The Path of Celtic Prayer, page 39-40*

I've learned from the prophets that I have to be involved in the affairs of man, in the affairs of suffering man.

*Abraham Joshua Heschel*

### **The Sound Of Silence**

Paul Simon, 1964. Written after the death of John Kennedy

Hello darkness, my old friend  
I've come to talk with you again  
Because a vision softly creeping  
Left its seeds while I was sleeping  
And the vision that was planted in my brain  
Still remains  
Within the sound of silence

In restless dreams I walked alone  
Narrow streets of cobblestone  
'Neath the halo of a street lamp  
I turn my collar to the cold and damp  
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash of  
a neon light  
That split the night  
And touched the sound of silence

And in the naked light I saw  
Ten thousand people maybe more  
People talking without speaking

People hearing without listening  
People writing songs that voices never  
shared  
No one dared  
Disturb the sound of silence

"Fools," said I, "you do not know  
Silence like a cancer grows  
Hear my words that I might teach you  
Take my arms that I might reach you"  
But my words like silent raindrops fell  
And echoed in the wells of silence

And the people bowed and prayed  
To the neon god they made  
And the sign flashed out its warning  
In the words that it was forming  
And the sign said "The words of the  
prophets are written on the subway walls  
And tenement halls  
And whispered in the sound of silence

### **Benediction**

In all that I am today, all that I try to do,  
all my encounters, reflections - even the frustrations and failings  
and especially in this time of prayer,  
in all of this may I place my life in your hands.  
Lord, I am yours. Make of me what you will. Amen.