

"Present, Powerful Peace" 1 Kings 19:9-18; Luke 5:1-11 Trinity 5 2022

The grace, mercy, and peace of Christ Jesus rest upon each and every one of you this day.

Is anyone surprised that Peter and the boys fall down in repentant fear when they realize that they are in the presence of almighty God? It's kind of difficult to ignore when your boat is sinking beneath your feet under the weight of the largest miraculous catch of fish you've ever seen in your life. Is anyone surprised that Peter and the boys left EVERYTHING sitting on the shore and immediately began to follow Jesus? After witnessing such a powerful miracle, how could you do anything else? Well... not so fast.

Remember that Elijah had just finished triumphing over 450 prophets of Baal in a huge God vs. Baal showdown; an all-consuming, fire-from-heaven display that made abundantly clear that God was completely in charge and Lord of all. Unfortunately, though, even after such a HUGE display of power and might, some people still refused to believe. In fact, wicked queen Jezebel sent word to Elijah, letting him know that by the same time tomorrow he would suffer the same deadly fate as those 450 Baal prophets he had just slaughtered. If something as powerful and miraculous as all-consuming fire from heaven and the subsequent slaughter of 450 false prophets won't convince people to turn from their evil and turn back to God, then what

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hope does he have for any kind of evangelistic success in this foul and wicked place? This is why Elijah tucks tail in sorrow and fear, and heads for the hills, eventually hiding in the cave. This is why Elijah cries out to God and asks that God just end it now and kill him. "I quit. I can't win. Just put an end to my miserable life. Take me home to heaven."

But you know the rest of this story. It's when Elijah finally settles down in his little cave hiding spot that the very Word of God Himself—preincarnate Christ—comes to Elijah and asks him, "Elijah, what are you doing here? Why are you here?" Elijah, still unrepentant at not doing what God wanted him to do, responds, "God, I've been very jealous for You. I've been an outstanding and faithful man, and yet it's been to no avail. Israel has rejected me and rejected You. They've torn down the altars and killed all your faithful prophets and are now worshipping false gods. Now they want to kill me. There's no hope for these people!"

This is when God tells Elijah to go stand outside on top of the mountain so that God can show him something. By means of mighty miracles and terrifying displays of power, God teaches Elijah a lesson about Himself and how He works. God very clearly demonstrates that He's not in the mighty things that man looks to. He's not in the mighty rock-shattering winds. He's not in the terrifying earthquake. He's not

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in the fire. God wasn't in any of those HUGE and awe-inspiring, terrifying things. Instead, God whispers to Elijah in the faintest, lowest little whisper; that tiny little whisper coming from inside the very cave that Elijah had just left. Elijah has to move back to the entrance of the cave in order to hear. How's that for "I am with you always"? "I've been here all along. You're the one who has left!"

Now, I know we understand what God is telling Elijah, but do we understand it in our own lives? Might we miss the almighty presence and peace of God because we're too busy looking for the mighty and miraculous instead of the lowly whispers already in our midst? You may not want to admit it, but it's very easy to become weak in the faith when things aren't going as great as we think they should. We always seem to need a sign/proof from God. His Word and Promise is never quite good enough for us. You may not want to admit it, but that doesn't make it any less true.

There's also the reality that that which terrifies us may not drive us back to God, but actually further away from Him. Just consider how the last three years have played out thus far. Look around at this crazy, chaotic, atheist world we live in. I understand why Elijah would feel so defeated and disillusioned. It seems that the Word of God is having no appreciable effect anymore. For all intents and purposes, it looks like

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Christianity is losing the fight. Sin runs rampant. You would think that even some of this would be enough to scare people straight and get them turned around and running to God. You would think.

And yet...let's face it: Look around. Nothing has really changed. All this craziness and fear in our daily lives, and it hasn't really drawn most people closer to God. In many cases, it's only driven them further away. People flock to the cabin, to Wal-Mart, to their favourite restaurant. They flock to Facebook and YouTube while never getting out of their pajamas. Very few seem to be flocking to God's Word in the midst of all this craziness. Very few flock to be in the presence of God. I understand Elijah's despair.

Folks: Where does God call you to be? What does He call you to do, in good times as well as in bad times, richer, poorer, in sickness and in health? Maybe the better question is: Where do you flee when the trials and tribulations hit? Does God ever have to tap you on the shoulder and say, "What are you doing here?" Look to the font, the altar, the pulpit, and the lectern. Here is this same almighty God, who conquered sin, death, and the devil, in the lowest, simplest, and most unexpected, over-looked places (kinda like almighty God in a fishing boat with a couple of lowly fishermen). Here is where your God and Lord is! He's right where He calls you to be! He's right where He

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Himself promises to be. He's right where He points you and directs you; He drawing near to you in order that you would draw near unto Him.

Now, we may not understand how this mystery of the Trinity works, but through faith in His Word and Promise, we do understand that this triune God is working for us and our salvation in/through these means of grace. He's "hiding" in plain sight. Ordinary and unassuming words. Ordinary men; nothing special. Ordinary water. Ordinary little morsels of bread and wine. By all worldly standards so puny, so seemingly ineffective...so "not enough." Faith sees and hears differently though. "I am with you always. Take and eat; take and drink. This is My body. This is My blood, given and shed for you for your forgiveness, for your assurance, for your peace that surpasses all understanding." Folks: You're not going to get this anywhere else! Where the Word is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered, there is Christ. Here is where He continually holds out to you His free gifts of mercy, grace, and peace.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ: Here is this blessed Immanuel Truth, graciously fulfilled and present even now in your midst....for you. May this real presence and peace of Christ be your

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desire, your assurance, and your peace all your remaining days and into all eternity. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit... AMEN