



SAINT MARK'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

*A Proper 14, 1 Kings 19:9-18, Matthew 14:22-33
St. Mark's, Little Rock, 8-13-17
Danny Schieffler*

How quickly Elijah has forgotten.

Only a few weeks ago

with God's help,

he was victorious in the famous contest

on Mt. Carmel

between Elijah

and the 450 prophets of Baal.

But now Elijah is on the run.

For 40 days he's been in the wilderness

afraid that Queen Jezebel is going to kill him.

And even though God has helped Elijah

time and again

Once again

Elijah has forgotten

God's faithfulness.

And now on Mt. Horeb, in today's lesson

Elijah is hungry and afraid.

And he feels as though he is all alone

In fact, telling God at one point

that he is the only prophet left

out of all of God's prophets.

--Even though

there's another place in the Bible

In which Elijah knows full well

that there are a 100 other of God's prophets

who have been spared

and are alive and well.

And yet when it comes to God

how quickly Elijah has forgotten

Just as we do sometimes
Things may have been going well only days or weeks ago
but then when difficulty comes
we forget that God is always near.
And sometimes find ourselves in a dark place
emotionally and spiritually.

To his credit though
when Elijah gets in this place,
even though he feels like dying
He does not give up completely
He is still seeking God

This time in the same place where Moses sought God
on Mt. Sinai.

In the gospel
Peter seems to forget as well
He's been with Jesus a long time already
And literally only yesterday
Peter saw Jesus

And the miracle of the multiplication of five loaves and two fish
when 5,000 men plus women and children
were fed by Jesus and the disciples,
and yet now
Even though Jesus has never let him down,
in the midst of the storm
Peter is afraid

And yet to his credit
He is still seeking to follow Jesus
even to the point
that when he sees Jesus walking on the water
coming toward them In the storm

And saying to them
"Take heart, it is I, Do not be afraid"
Peter responded"
"Lord, if it is you?
Command me to come to you on the water."
And Jesus does
and so does Peter

and for a moment
all is well
But then when Peter notices the storm

Its as though he forget about Jesus
even though Jesus is right in front of him
once again Peter is afraid
and he begins to sink.

Its here though

that I can relate to Peter.

When my focus is on Christ

My perspective is better

My thinking clearer

And my faith stronger

And yet sometimes the very next day

Or the even the same day

when I start to focus on the storms of life

I begin to sink.

You would think I would know better

You would think Peter would know better

And yet still I find myself forgetting

and I give my attention to the storm,

And I begin to sink.

And in a sense

that's what's happened to Elijah

back in the cave

forgetful, feeling alone and afraid.

And yet though all this

In spite of Elijah's forgetting

God is nevertheless faithful to Elijah

God comes to Elijah

not perhaps like Elijah expected

and maybe not as Elijah wanted

For when he stood high up on the mountain

at the entrance of a cave

God wasn't in the fire

as God was in Moses' day

And God wasn't in the wind

Or the earthquake

Rather God was in

a still small voice

or as the NRSV translates it

the sound of sheer silence.

Meister Eckhart said

God's first language is silence.
Everything else is a poor translation.
And sure enough in the silence
Elijah encountered God.
Peter also encounters God in this lesson
But I doubt in the way that Peter expected.
Like so many more in the Bible before him
Noah, Jonah, Elijah, David
And now other disciples
Mary Magdalene
And many more
Peter has gotten in over his head
And like the others in the Scripture
Peter could be said to be a failure
even a failure of biblical proportions
And yet
time and again
Its in failure, weakness, brokenness
When the people in the Bible are in over their head
When we are in over our head
When we are at the worst
God is at God's best.
And so when Peter sinks
Jesus comes and takes hold of him.
And when they get into boat,
the wind ceases.
And in doing so
Jesus shows Peter and the disciples and us
There is another way
Instead of waiting until we are in the midst of a storm.
And that's to do what Jesus did
in advance of a storm.
In the midst of all the busyness of his life
Between the crowds
Between the feedings
Between the healings
Between the days,
Jesus went up on the mountain pray.
And found in silence of eternity
The power of his Father

that enabled him
Not to run from the storm
But to confront it
And face it head on.
And in case you are wondering what happened to Elijah
After meeting God in silence
He too met the storm head on
For when He left that mountain
He went right back to Damascus
But this time with renewed energy and courage.
And he anointed Hazael as King
Jehu as King
And Elisha as prophet.
Elijah went from coward to kingmaker
And it happened in silence
The same silence
where God waits for us.