



Sermon Preached on Sunday of the VBS Program, Third Sunday of Pentecost

The Lord was not in the great strong wind. The Lord was not in the earthquake. The Lord was not in the fire. But the Lord was in the still small voice.

Grace, mercy and peace are yours through the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

Last week was an exciting week. The halls and grounds of Trinity Lutheran church were filled with the joy and laughter of some 100 kids and about half that of volunteers. I speak for all, when I say that last week was amazing, glorious, God-pleasing.

The lesson for this morning comes from 1 Kings 19. Elijah is alone. Or at least, he feels alone. Elijah is the prophet of the Lord, called to the lost souls of ancient Israel. However, his words fall on deaf and stopped ears. No one listens. No one hears the word of the Lord from the Prophet Elijah. In his misery, Elijah calls upon the Lord, seeking an explanation of why this is happening. How can it be that the people of Israel – God’s people – have rejected the Lord? And in his lonely sorrow, the Lord comes. And God asks Elijah a question: God says, “Elijah, what are you doing here?” As if to say, “Elijah, none of my people are on this mountain. You are not my prophet to the mountain, but my prophet to my people.” And God comes to Elijah. First, God sends a great strong wind that rips apart the mountain. But God is not in the wind. Second, God sends an earthquake. But God is not in the earthquake. Third, God sends a fire. But God is not in the fire. And after these things, Elijah heard the small sound of a low whisper. When he heard it, he wrapped his face, for he new this was the Lord and that he could not look upon the face of God. It is with a whisper where the Lord reinvigorates his prophet and sends him back to the people. Not a whirlwind; not an earthquake; not a fire; but a whisper delivers strength to Elijah. And God promises a remnant of 7000 Israelites who have not worshipped the false god Baal. So, Elijah descends the mountain; and he returns; and he preaches to the people.

1 Kings 19 teaches us many things about God. But today, we focus on just one: How God comes to us. Has God come to his people in the epic manifestations like a strong tempest, an earthquake or a fire? For certain, he has. Stories from the Exodus, like the parting of the Red Sea and the pillars of fire and smoke come to mind. And in the New Testament, in Jesus’ earthly ministry, he also manifests the power and glory of heaven in awesome ways. But 1 Kings 19 uniquely teaches us that God sometimes comes to us in the still, small voice of a whisper. Our God is the God who can move mountains. Our God is the God who parts the seas. Our God is the God who opens tombs. But our God is also the God who whispers.

Vacation Bible School is one of those moments that feels more like a whirlwind, an earthquake or a firestorm. Just ask one of the many volunteers; last week was a whirlwind, for sure. And God comes to us in the whirlwind, for sure. But we miss the valuable truth in 1 Kings 19 if we overlook the still, small voice.

In the words of the Psalmist, I invite you to be still and know that God is the Lord. I encourage you to go to him in the silence of prayer. I implore you to hear him speak in his written word. The lesson this morning is that if we are waiting for a whirlwind or an earthquake or a fire, then we may be liable to miss his visitation. Our God is the God of VBS; but he is also the God who visits us and speaks his gift-giving word every Sunday. Come listen to his still small voice every week. Hear his word of encouragement, just as he spoke to his prophet some three thousand years ago.

Have you ever felt the weight of the world? Have you ever felt abandoned? Have you ever felt like Elijah – a prophet with no one to hear him prophesy? You are in good company. The church is not the place for those of perfect resumes or spotless records. Much like how a hospital is for the sick and the school is built for students; the church exists for the broken, the sorrowful, the lowly... the sinner. The church's sole existence and purpose is to preach the saving gospel of Jesus Christ and to deliver his good gifts of forgiveness and life. Should you doubt any of this, consider last week's VBS as our invitation to you and your family to join our church family and to hear the voice of God every time we gather in his name.

I had a great time last week. The volunteers had a great time last week. Your kids had a great time last week. So many songs, bible lessons, crafts, activities and games. But in the midst of it all, we were gathered in the name of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. His voice was heard. And our prayer is that his gospel was and is believed last week and today.

In the name of the resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ, the Lord of VBS and every Sunday in between. Amen.