

Welcome to Worship at
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI
Pentecost 12 - August 23, 2020

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Hymn #281 - “*God Has Spoken by His Prophets*”

**God has spoken by his prophets,
Spoken his unchanging Word,
Each from age to age proclaiming
God the one, the righteous Lord.
In the world’s despair and turmoil
One firm anchor holds us fast:
God is king, his throne eternal,
God the first and God the last.**

**God has spoken by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
Brightness of the Father’s glory,
With the Father ever one,
Spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, before time was,
Light from Light, to earth descending-
He reveals our God to us.**

**God is speaking by his Spirit,
Speaking to the hearts of all,
In the ageless Word expounding
His own message for us all.
Through the rise and fall of nations
One sure faith is standing fast.
God abides, his Word unchanging,
God the first and God the last.**

Confession of Sins:

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!

P: Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

First Lesson: 1 Kings 19:9-18

He came to a cave and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord suddenly came to him, saying, "Why are you here, Elijah?" He said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of Armies, but the people of Israel have abandoned your covenant. They have torn down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking to take my life." Then the Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is passing by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains and shattered rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there was a soft, whispering voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak, and he went out and stood at the entrance to the cave. Then a voice came to him and said, "Why are you here, Elijah?" He said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of Armies, but the people of Israel have abandoned your covenant. They have torn down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking to take my life." Then the Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came and go to the Wilderness of Damascus. When you get there, you are to anoint Hazael as king over Aram. You will also anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel and Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah as prophet in your place. Whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill, and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. But I have preserved in Israel seven thousand whose knees have not bent to Baal and whose lips have not kissed him." (EHV)

Psalm 73:

Refrain: Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior.

**I am always with 'you, O LORD;
You hold me by my 'right hand.
You guide me with your 'counsel,
And afterward you will take me into 'glory.**

**Whom have I in heav'en but you?
And earth has nothing I desire be'sides you.**

**My flesh and my 'heart may fail,
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion for'ever.**

**Glory be to the Father and 'to the Son
And to the Holy 'Spirit,
As it was in the be'ginning,
Is now, and will be forever. 'Amen.**

Refrain: Surely, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and not be afraid. For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, and he will be my Savior.

Second Lesson: Romans 9:1-5

I am speaking the truth in Christ - I am not lying - my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit that I have great sorrow and continuous pain in my heart. For I almost wish that I myself could be cursed and separated from Christ in place of my brothers, my relatives according to the flesh, those who are Israelites. Theirs are the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, came the Christ, who is God over all, eternally blessed. Amen. (EHV)

Verse of the Day: Alleluia. Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Alleluia.

The Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33

Immediately Jesus urged the disciples to get into the boat and to go ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed the crowd, he

went up onto the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. By then the boat was quite a distance from shore, being pounded by the waves because the wind was against it. In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came toward them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified and cried out in fear, "It's a ghost!" But Jesus spoke to them at once, saying, "Take heart! It is I! Do not be afraid." Peter answered him and said, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus said, "Come!" Peter stepped down from the boat, walked on the water, and went toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind, he was afraid. As he began to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him, and said to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind stopped. Those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God!" (EHV)

The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn #384 - *"By Grace I'm Saved"*

**By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless;
My soul, believe and doubt it not.
Why waver at this word of promise?
Has Scripture ever falsehood taught?
So then this word must true remain:
By grace you, too, shall heav'n obtain.**

**By grace God's Son, our only Savior,
Came down to earth to bear our sin.**

Was it because of your own merit
That Jesus died, your soul to win?
No, it was grace, and grace alone,
That brought him from his heav'nly throne.

By grace! Oh, mark this word of promise
When you are by your sins oppressed,
When Satan plagues your troubled conscience,
And when your heart is seeking rest.
What reason cannot comprehend
God by his grace to you did send.

By grace to timid hearts that tremble,
In tribulation's furnace tried -
By grace, despite all fear and trouble,
The Father's heart is open wide.
Where could I help and strength secure
If grace were not my anchor sure?

By grace! On this I'll rest when dying;
In Jesus' promise I rejoice.
For though I know my heart's condition,
I also know my Savior's voice.
My heart is glad; all grief has flown
Since I am saved by grace alone

The Sermon: 1 Kings 19:9-18
"The Gentle Whisper Of God's Word"

The opening words of our text for today pose the **question**, "*Why are you here?*" That question can be asked in a number of different ways, depending on where you place the **emphasis**. For example, you could ask the question concentrating on the **person**, "*Why are you here?*" or zeroing in on the **location**, "*Why are you here?*" We could be focusing on the question itself, "**Why are you here?**" And the same words could even be used to express **anger** or **disgust** at someone's actions by saying, "**Why are you here?**" So with all those **options** being available, when we see those words **printed** on a page, it's very difficult to tell how they were **meant** to be expressed. This morning, let's try to find out how **God** meant those words to be expressed as He spoke them to the Prophet **Elijah**.

Let me briefly review for you what had happened in the account which immediately **precedes** our text. Israel was being ruled by the wicked King **Ahab**, and his equally wicked wife, **Jezebel**. Through their influence, they had seen to it that the worship of **Baal** and **Asherah** had become **rampant** in Israel - **so** rampant that the time had come for a **showdown**. So, Elijah issued a challenge to the 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of Asherah. These 850 prophets gathered together on **Mt. Carmel** to offer a **sacrifice**, while Elijah would **single-handedly** offer the same sacrifice to the **Lord**. In spite of the seemingly overwhelming odds **against** Elijah, the Lord came through, and in a dramatic display of His power, He completely **consumed** Elijah's sacrifice.

When the people of Israel **saw** what the LORD had done, they seized all 850 of the false prophets, brought them to Elijah, and Elijah had them put to **death** in the Kishon Valley. Needless to say, **Ahab** and **Jezebel** were not pleased. Immediately the word went out that Queen Jezebel wanted Elijah **killed** within the next 24 hours - and in spite of the seemingly overwhelming **support** of the common people which Elijah had seen on **Mt. Carmel**, nobody was willing to **stand up** for him against Queen Jezebel. So, Elijah **ran** for his life, thinking that the situation was virtually **hopeless**, and his enemies would certainly **overtake** him and **kill** him. It was just a matter of **time**.

But the **Lord** was with Elijah, and enabled him not only to get out of the **country**, but also to reach **Mt. Sinai** - the mountain of the Lord. That's where our text for today begins. The Lord opens our text today by asking the question, "*Why are you here, Elijah?*" It was a very simple and direct **question** which deserved a simple and direct **answer**. The Lord wanted Elijah to account for his **actions**. So, Elijah should have been **honest** and said, "Lord, I'm here because I **ran away**, and I ran away because I was **afraid**." But instead, he **side-stepped** the issue. What Elijah said was, "*I have been very **zealous** for the Lord, the God of Armies, but the people of **Israel** have **abandoned** your covenant. They have **torn down** your altars and **killed** your prophets with the sword. I alone am **left**, and they are seeking to take **my** life.*" Like an immature **child**, Elijah tried to blame his problems on everyone **else**, instead of looking at the faults within **himself**. He thought things had gotten **so bad** in Israel, that he might well be the only **believer** left in the whole world. So with that thought in mind, and having miraculously reached Mt. Sinai, he took the opportunity to try and get some additional **action** from **God**. Elijah asked God for **personal protection**, and also that God would **punish** those who had **forsaken** the LORD.

The Lord's reply is rather **interesting**. God asked Elijah a **second** time, but perhaps with a slightly different **emphasis**, "*Why are you **here**, Elijah?*" Again, God was looking for a **simple** answer - perhaps something like, "Well Lord, now that I'm **here**, I guess I'll just **die** here, because my life isn't worth **living** any more. Now that I'm the **only** believer left on the face of the earth, I surely can't make much of an **impact**. So, I guess I'll just **stay** here, and feel **sorry** for myself." Now **remember**, Elijah had just participated in one of the greatest **triumphs** over heathenism which has ever been recorded. Elijah had probably figured that after such a huge triumph, he would now be recognized as a national **hero**, and perhaps would even receive a **medal**, or a **promotion**, or at least **something**. Yet, nobody seemed to **notice**, nobody seemed to **care** - except the **bad** guys - and they all wanted to **kill** him.

But Elijah had failed to realize that **God** had noticed. Just as the Lord had been **with** him when he took on those 850 heathen prophets, the Lord was **also** with him **now**. The Lord said, "*'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is passing by.'* Then a great and powerful **wind** tore the mountains and shattered rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not **in** the wind. After the wind came an **earthquake**, but the Lord was not in the **earthquake**. After the earthquake there was a **fire**, but the Lord was not in the **fire**. After the fire there was a **soft, whispering** voice. When Elijah **heard** it, he wrapped his face in his cloak, and he went out and stood at the entrance to the cave." What the Lord was trying to do here was to show Elijah that the **reason** he was feeling so sorry for himself, was that he was looking for **evidence** of God's support and presence in all the **wrong** places. When Elijah left Israel to make this journey to Mt. Sinai, he probably thought that God would take some kind of **powerful** and **dramatic** action - just like the vivid fireworks display on **Mt. Carmel**. But when that didn't **happen**, Elijah thought the Lord had **pulled out** and left him **stranded** - so, Elijah felt **sorry** for himself.

But Elijah had no **reason** to feel sorry for himself, and God clearly **told** him so. All Elijah needed to **do** was to focus on **The Gentle Whisper Of God's Word**, instead of on the **big noise** of Mt. Carmel. Isn't it interesting that when the Lord appeared to Elijah, He was not in the things which we view as **powerful** - the **wind** - the **earthquake** - or the **fire**. God was in the soft, little **voice** - in **The Gentle Whisper Of His Word**. And as soon as Elijah **heard** it, he went out to the mouth of the cave to **listen** to the voice of the Lord.

Have **you** been listening to **The Gentle Whisper Of God's Word**? When the world is **shouting** and **clamoring** all around us, it can be difficult to **hear**

God's Word. All around us are the **loud, booming** voices of the **government** and public **health** officials, and the **politicians** on both sides of the aisle, not to mention the unbelievably large number of **protesters** and **rioters**. So, what **we** need to do is find a **quiet** place where we can **shut out** all the noises of the world, and we can concentrate on our **God**. We need to **turn off** our **televisions**, and **radios**, and **computers**, and **cell phones**. We need to stop worrying about what **time** it is, or how **long** it's going to take, and just sit down with our families and **study** God's Word together. When we **do** that, God will show us just how **powerful** His gentle whisper can be in our **lives**.

Worshipping here at **church** can also help to shut out the **distractions** of the outside world. And although we won't be holding in-person **Sunday School** classes this year, **online** Sunday School lessons will be available. Here again, our children have a great opportunity to listen to **The Gentle Whisper Of God's Word**. Classes like these, where we learn more about **God** and His **Word**, really aren't very **popular** in our society today. But, our children will be **wiser** than the great majority of people in our world, if they fight **against** society's way of thinking, and take in the **blessings** which God has to offer them in His Word, each and every week. Those classes won't always be **glitzy** and **glamorous**, but they will provide our young people with the spiritual tools they need to survive as **Christians** in a godless world.

Elijah got what **he** needed from that gentle whisper too. I think it is significant that Elijah immediately recognized that the **Lord** was in that gentle whisper. And once God had his **attention**, He proceeded to give Elijah this somewhat **disturbing** message. *"Go back the way you **came** and go to the Wilderness of **Damascus**. When you get there, you are to anoint **Hazael** as king over Aram. You will also anoint **Jehu** son of Nimshi king over Israel and **Elisha** son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah as prophet **in your place**."* In **other** words, God was telling Elijah, "You're **replaceable** Elijah, and right now you're in the **wrong** place. You **started out** doing well, but you **stopped**. I still have some more things for you to **do**, but they **don't** involve sitting around **here** and feeling **sorry** for yourself. By the way, I still have **7,000** faithful ones who have not submitted to Baal worship, so you're **not** all alone. Elijah, I haven't pulled out on **you**, so don't **you** pull out on **Me**."

Well, with those words Elijah had some **answers**, even if they **weren't** exactly the answers he had been **seeking**. He knew that God still had **work** for him to do, and that God would provide all the **protection** he would need to **carry out** that work. He also knew that God would **punish** those who had been worshipping

Baal. In fact, He would **destroy** them through **Hazael** (a foreign king from the northern country of Syria), through **Jehu** (Israel's own future king), and through **Elisha** (the prophet who would follow Elijah). But, all this would require Elijah to **return** to the land of Israel, in order to **anoint** these men for God's service. But because a **death warrant** was still out for him, such a return would be **dangerous** for Elijah. Nevertheless, it **had** to be done.

Sometimes we find **ourselves** in the same boat as Elijah. Things start going rather **badly** for us, and our **initial** reaction is simply to **run away**. We think that if we get far enough away, then we will be **safe**. But God doesn't usually let us get **away** with that. Instead, He tells us that He has **work** for us to do - **difficult** work - and we think, there must be an **easier** way. Or, God tells us that He has **work** for us to do - but it's not **here** - and we would really like to **stay** here. So, what do we **do**? What did **Elijah** do?

Although it's not a part of our text this morning, the verses which immediately **follow** today's text tell us that Elijah **went** back to Israel, and he **did** the things which the Lord had **asked** of him. We're **also** told that the **Lord** held up **His** end of the deal too, and He **protected** Elijah from danger time and time again. The end result will be the same for **us** too - if we also **listen** to the voice of the Lord. Take a look at yourselves - as **individuals**, as **families**, and as a Christian **congregation**. Ask yourself, "What am I **doing** here?" Am I **afraid**? Am I feeling **sorry** for myself? Am I **running away** from problems and difficulties? Or, am I **doing** what **God** wants me to do? Am I following **His** will for my life? Am I making use of **all** the opportunities I have to hear **The Gentle Whisper Of God's Word**. And if I'm **not**, what am I **doing** about it? Have I tried to make **excuses**, and blame my faults and shortcomings on **others** - or have I **admitted** my sinfulness to God, and asked for His **forgiveness**? Dear friends, whatever the case may be, remember that we will always find what we need to know in **The Gentle Whisper Of God's Word**. May we always do whatever it takes to **listen** to it - **faithfully**, **frequently**, and **carefully**. Amen.

Prayers:

Lord Jesus, we believe that You are the **Christ**, the Son of the living God. We also believe that You became a **man**, so that as our **Substitute** You might suffer, bleed, and die for our sins. As we look toward the future, we ask that You would make us steadfast and true in **confessing** our faith to others. Don't let the **unbelief** and **ridicule** with which many people respond to Your name, **discourage** us from **sharing** our faith with others, or from declaring our **love** for You. May we never be **ashamed** of You, or in any way **deny** You.

Lord, looking back on the **past**, we must admit that we have at times **failed** in our mission as Your witnesses. Our many **sins** have formed **barriers** to confessing Your name to others. Moments of **doubt** have robbed our testimony of **vitality** and **conviction**. There have been times when our lack of **knowledge** concerning Your **will** and Your **Word**, has been a **hindrance** to our testifying to the truth. There have been occasions when the Holy Spirit has thrown the door wide **open** for us, giving us splendid **opportunities** to confess You to others, but we remained **silent**. There have been times when we were **timid**, when we should have been **bold** - and times we were filled with **fear** when we should have been filled with **confidence**.

Dear Savior, don't hold these human failures against us, but rather, **forgive** our sins. And through Your Holy Spirit, supply whatever we **need** to make us Your **bold, efficient, and faithful** witnesses to the world. Give us the desire and the opportunity to **study** Your Word **frequently** and **faithfully**. Enlarge our **understanding** of that Word, deepen our **appreciation** for the salvation which You have earned for us, and increase our **zeal** to confess Your saving name to the world. Let **Your** glory, which **shines** in all Your words and works, **light up** our hearts - and shine **through** us to **others**.

Daily increase the number of those who come to **know** You as their Savior, and help them to **become** and **remain** faithful witnesses. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.
Amen.**

Hymn #512 - "Let Children hear the Mighty Deeds"

**Let children hear the mighty deeds
Which God performed of old,**

**Which in our younger years we saw,
And which our fathers told.**

**Make unto them his glories known,
His works of pow'r and grace,
And we'll convey his wonders down
Through ev'ry rising race.**

**Our lips shall tell them to our sons
And they again to theirs
That generations yet unborn
May teach them to their heirs.**

**Oh, teach them with all diligence
The truths of God's own Word,
To place in him their confidence,
To fear and trust their Lord.**

**To learn that in our God alone
Their hope securely stands,
That they may ne'er forget his works,
But walk in his commands.**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Blessing:

P: The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

Hymn #542 - "Dear Lord, to Your True Servants Give"

**Dear Lord, to your true servants give
The grace to you alone to live.
Set free from sin to serve you, Lord,**

**They go to share your living Word,
The gospel message to proclaim
That all may know your saving name.**

**They gladly go at your command
To spread your Word o'er sea and land.
Be with them, Lord, and make them strong
To heal sin's ills, to right the wrong.
Your rule is over wind and wave,
And mighty is your arm to save.**

**When all their labor seems in vain,
Revive their sinking hopes again;
And when success crowns what they do,
Oh, keep them humble, Lord, and true
Until before your judgment seat
They lay their trophies at your feet.**