

1 Kings 19:9-18

- Elijah just had his greatest triumph. God proved to be the true God over against the prophets of Baal. The drought of three years has ended (1 Kings 18:20-46). Yet, with the threats of Queen Jezebel, Elijah fears for his life and runs away. Notice how far away he has gone. Mt. Carmel – where the victory happened – is found along The Great Sea, in the upper right of the map. Mt. Horeb – where he flees to – is found in the lower left, over 50-75 miles away. Elijah feels alone and abandoned. Have you ever had an experience when you feel defeated even after a time that you have had success?
- The text invites us to explore where we find God. As Elijah waits for God, a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire occur, but God is not found there. Rather, God is found in the “sheer silence.” God is found in the absence. Where we feel most deserted, God is found there. In the absence, God is here. In the silence, God is present.
- The other message of the passage to Elijah is that he is not alone. God sends Elijah out to anoint new kings and a new prophet in his place. God also promises that a remnant is in place that support him. When have you been reminded in a real way that you are not alone?



Psalms 85:8-13

- Note some of the verses left out of the reading:
*Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation towards us.
Will you be angry with us for ever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?
Will you not revive us again,
so that your people may rejoice in you?
Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.*

The psalm is a cry to God when the psalmist feels abandoned. The section we read on Sunday is the response to this cry and this feeling of abandonment.

- Note the use of bodily imagery and nature imagery. Steadfast love and faithfulness meet. Righteousness and peace kiss. Faithfulness springs up from the earth. Righteousness looks down from the sky. How can we let these qualities be embodied and “en-natured” with us?
- What does it mean that righteousness/justice “go before the Lord” and “prepare for God a pathway”? How do we prepare that way in our lives and in our community?

Romans 10:5-15

- The passage first contrasts the righteousness – “being set right” - from the law with the righteousness – “being set right” - from faith. The righteousness from law looks elsewhere: to the heavens or to the depths of the earth. The righteousness from faith looks within: to the word near you “on your lips and in your heart.” Paul challenges us to look within ourselves for how we are set right with God.
- This passage occurs in the midst of Paul’s struggle with what will happen with the Jews. The second half of our lesson asks if it is a case of not having heard the proclamation of Jesus. He will answer in the verses that follow that they have heard. Yet, even with that argument, Paul challenges us about whether we are making Jesus known. How do we expect people to respond to Jesus if they do not ever hear about Jesus from us?

Matthew 14:22-33

- We recall that this scenario occurs directly after the feeding of the 5000. Like what we encountered with the Elijah story, this impending disaster happens after one of Jesus’ greatest miracles. Once again, have we ever had an experience of loss or disaster after a great success or celebration?
- In the ancient culture, the sea represents chaos, precisely because of the suddenness of such horrific storms. Note that the sea does not become calm right away. Jesus enters into the chaos and invites Peter to walk with him in the chaos. In this sense, we are invited to look for Jesus in the midst of our chaos, knowing that calm and quiet will come. How can we keep our eyes on Jesus and not on the waves around us?