

God speaks in the silence



1 Kings 19:4-13

Elijah went on into the wilderness, a day's journey, and sitting under a furze bush wished he were dead. 'O Lord,' he said 'I have had enough. Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down and went to sleep. But an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat'. He looked round, and there at his head was a scone baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. But the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you'. So he got up and ate and drank, and strengthened by that food he walked for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into the cave and spent the night in it. Then the word of the Lord came to him saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I am filled with jealous zeal for the Lord Sabaoth, because the sons of Israel have deserted you, broken down your altars and put your prophets to the sword. I am the only one left, and they want to kill me.' Then he was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.' Then the Lord himself went by. There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the 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 came a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a gentle breeze. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.



Reflection

We have just heard the story of Elijah. Elijah wished he was dead. An angel of the Lord came to him twice and encouraged him to eat and drink in preparation for his journey along the road to Horeb, God's mountain.

We are told that he journeyed for forty days and forty nights. He went into a cave and spent the night there. It was within the silence of the cave that the still small murmur of the voice of God was heard.

Many, many years later, Mary and Joseph set out together on the way to Bethlehem. They reached a type of cave not too dissimilar to Elijah's cave, a shelter for shepherds, on a hillside in the region of Bethlehem.

A Pilgrim Remembers

I went there with a group of pilgrims, together on the road to Bethlehem. Join me now as we stumble down some steps into a cave partially underground. It was totally silent inside. We sense rather than see other people. As our eyes adjust to the darkness, we can see a manger with an image of the Christ child within. In the gentle stillness, in the presence of God the humming began.... *Silent night, holy night*. It was within the silence of the cave that the still small murmur of the voice of God was heard. I knew I wasn't the only one to hear it when the man standing next to me shed silent tears. Let us listen to that silence now....

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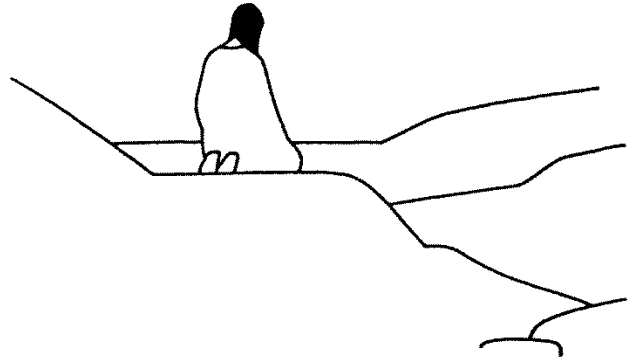
Questions to ponder

- Can I set aside a time of silence each day to listen to the voice of God?
- Am I able to listen in silence and see the Spirit at work in the broken lives of God's people?



Concluding prayer

Lord, we pray that through stillness which leads to silence, we may hear the voice of God, and we may listen with the compassion and tenderness of Christ to each other. Amen.



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