

Sunday 19th June 2022

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.
God is ever present, around us and within us,
we worship together in God.

Reading 1 Kings 19:1-15 ([The Living Bible](#))
 Psalm 42 ([The Living Bible](#))

Reflection

Elijah had outwitted the Baal Gods and their prophets had been scattered to the four winds. Yet despite that, Jezebel still held the power, and she was all the more determined to track down the elusive Elijah. In his humanity he felt frail, and mistakenly that he alone was left as a faithful spokesman for the God of Israel.

In fear of his life he ran away from Jezebel, right to the south of Judah, then south again from Beersheba to Mt Sinai. It was here that Moses had taken the escaping slaves. This was the very centre of his people's faith where the covenant had been made. This was where God's people could still gain fresh inspiration, and surely that was what Elijah sought despite his words of failure. And that was what Elijah found.

The words of Psalm 42 could have been written by Elijah, and many millions of people of faith since. When the world seems against us it is easy to feel far from God, and far from the base of our faith, we feel in a wilderness. I am sure you can look back through your life and recognise moments of wilderness, I know I can, times when I did not know what to do and sat and shouted at God as I imagine Elijah did, and times when I struggled with church, or found myself adrift from church. Yet God's love holds us, and a miracle happens.

Story – Things will change

There was once a middle-aged man who fell upon really hard times. First, he lost his job and could no longer keep up the payments on his home. Then his wife left him and took the children with her, and he fell into deep despair.

One day he heard tell of a wise sage who lived far away in India. He decided to seek out this wise one and ask what he should do. He journeyed far across the sea, over the mountains, up and down the river valleys, until after a very, very long time he arrived at the dwelling of the wise sage, and told him the sorry story.

The sage listened carefully, and when the story was told he looked deep into the eyes of his visitor and pronounced his wisdom: "Things will change," he assured him.

This was not what the man had expected to hear, and he felt disappointed in what he saw as an unhelpful answer. Depressed, the man went all the way back home, up and down the valleys, over the mountains, and across the sea. Time passed, and the wind of fortune changed direction. The man found a job. He saved enough money to get his house back. His wife returned with the children. They were happy again. He remembered the sage's words to him. "Surely, he was absolutely right," he marvelled. "I must go and tell him how right he was. I must go and thank him."

So, he set out for a second time, across the ocean, over the mountains, up and down the valleys, until he reached the dwelling of the wise sage. Delighted at his renewed fortune he recounted how the sage had been completely right, and everything had indeed changed for the better.

The sage listened carefully, looked deep into the eyes of his visitor, and pronounced once more: "Things will change."

Original source unknown

For Elijah, in an experience of deep emotion in which he was reminded of the power of God in nature, he recognised that God's supreme activity was to be seen in the events of everyday life. He had delivered the slaves from Egypt and was still active in his people's lives.

As Elijah listened, he realised he must return and once again stir up a political ferment, in both Syria and Israel, which would lead to the overthrow of the house of Omri and its allies, a story told in I Kings 19:1-18.

This commitment to the covenant faith which was central to his life did not make him a mere reactionary, it transformed him into a political activist, reminding his people by his social involvement that the God of Mt Sinai was still their only true king.

For many Lockdown became a wilderness place, a place of separation and change. Some Christians have found it difficult to return to church, the base of their faith journey. Perhaps it no longer seems relevant, perhaps they are struggling with the 'old' expression of God in the face of Covid or perhaps they have questions as Elijah and Psalmist had and mistakenly feel church is not the place to ask them.

Most of us have questions at some time but like Elijah, in the stillness of the wilderness and the quiet of our hearts we hear and know God. We recognise a call to journey on into a new land or to return to the familiar ready to ask the questions and raise a challenge. How do we as church respond to this need in others? Are we ready to welcome the questioner and walk with them in a new land? I believe we are called to a new expression of church for a new expression of life and community. We are beating Covid but it has changed the landscape and now we need to be ready to explore this new world and be church in a new way.

Prayer based on Psalm 42

Loving God, as does everything in creation, my soul longs for the feel of your presence. When the world feels against me, and everything I do seems for nothing, my soul longs for the feel of your presence. When others shower doubt on my faith and taunt my belief in the goodness of creation my soul longs.

In the stillness of my heart I remember, the good days, the belonging, the joy, the sense of wonder and I recognise the temptation to forget and succumb, but my heart sings and I resolve to journey on to a new place in the courage of the Spirit.

Yet, here in this moment the darkness still flows, and I struggle. May I remember the goodness in creation, may the beauty of creation be the sun in my dark day, the rivers channels of hope flowing to the sea of your oneness, and the falling leaves be the boat that carries me onwards.

In the presence of your love I am held, and my prayers, day and night, bring me closer to you, the source of all being. When I struggle to understand life, and feel apart from you, your love draws me onwards and inwards, and I know that even in the darkest place your love shines, and I praise you.

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