

Thursday, May 7, 2020

Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

**"There he came to a cave and lodged in it.
And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him,
'What are you doing here, Elijah?'
He said, 'I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts.
For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars,
and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left,
and they seek my life, to take it away.'"**
(I Kings 19: 9-10)

I don't know if you are familiar with the story of Elijah running away from Jezebel and hiding out in a cave. It was only one chapter before this that Elijah was bravely confronting 850 prophets of false gods in a showdown to see whose God was the true God. Obviously the true God, our God, showed Himself to be the only God, and, at the end of the showdown, Elijah had all of these followers of these false gods killed. That's when Jezebel, a very wicked wife of King Ahab, threatened to take Elijah's life. So, now, just one chapter later, Elijah is on the run from Jezebel's threats. Where had his courage gone?

So, Elijah ran away and attempted to "self-isolate" in a cave. But it was to no avail. He was not able to "self-isolate" from God. God found Him and came and spoke to him and asked him why he was there. Elijah proceeded to explain to God that everything was falling apart – that all of the people of Israel had forsaken God – and that Elijah himself was the only one left who was remaining faithful to God. Things felt so helpless to Elijah that he even prayed that God would take his life. He didn't feel that he was able to go on under the circumstances.

God had a different perspective. God told Elijah that he was NOT the only one left, that there were 7,000 others who had NOT bowed their knees to this false god named Baal. In other words, things were NOT as far gone as Elijah imagined. Not only that, but God told Elijah that Elijah still had work to do, and that work was not found in a cave. God told Elijah to leave the cave and continue about the business that God had given him to do.

We have been instructed these days to "shelter-in-place." And it is wise to heed this instruction. This instruction has its limits, however. We may be told that we should stay at home, or stay away from people as much as possible, but as God's people we should not take this to an extreme. In other words, if we should find ourselves holing up in a "cave of despair," or imagining that things are worse than they are, God will come looking for us to say, "I have not left the scene! I am still in the picture, and I still have a plan and a purpose for humanity that I will continue to bring about through the witness of my people."

God is still at work IN and THROUGH the lives and the witness of Jesus-followers. I love the part in the Elijah story when God shows up at the cave and says to Elijah, "What are doing here, Elijah?" It's like God is saying, "Have you forgotten about ME? Even if you are the only one left – YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY ONE LEFT! I'm still here, and I am still in charge!" Nothing was over for Elijah. The cave was Elijah's own doing. The situation may be challenging. Life outside the cave may be a difficult reality, but that's where God is at work. He's at work outside the cave. And Jezebel is no match for God – whoever or whatever "Jezebel" may be for us.

Elijah ended up leaving the cave. God did not comply with Elijah's request that God take his life. Elijah got back to work as the Prophet of God!

I can imagine God saying to you and me: "Get out of bed every day. Eat your food. Look up to heaven and ask, 'How would you have me to serve and glorify Your Name today, O Lord?'"

I don't know how Elijah managed to forget that God was still in the picture? Wait ... yes I do! I forget the same thing several times a day. Thank God, He comes to me when I am hunkering down in my "cave" of fear or uncertainty or depression, and He says, "What are doing here!? I'm still in the business of being God!"

God's peace!
Pastor Jim