

“A Still Small Voice”  
1 Kings 19:7-12  
(Preached at Trinity, August 29, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 19** proves to be a challenge for Biblical expositors. How do we understand the despondency of Elijah? What led him to desire death?  
And now we come to the mystical “still small voice” that has fascinated expositors for centuries? The challenges of this chapter do not ease.
2. In **Chapter 18** we witnessed the almighty power of God as Baal was shown to be a figment wrought in the corrupted imaginations of men. The prophets of Baal failed in their efforts to call forth Baal and they were executed.
  - A. The unmistakable display of God's power brought Israel to tremble at His presence. They reaffirmed their commitment to God. Elijah would have been hopeful that Israel had finally returned to their covenant relationship with God, but it was a tentative hope. Israel's history was marked by broken promises.  
**1 Kings 18:39 NAU** - "When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."
  - B. When Ahab arrived home he called Jezebel and told her all that had transpired between Elijah and her prophets.  
We can see the depraved heart of Ahab. He was present for the entire scene on Mount Carmel, and yet he says nothing about what God had done. He only spoke of what Elijah had done.  
**1 Kings 19:1 NAU** - "Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword."
  - C. We can also see the depraved heart of Jezebel. She was consumed by her wickedness and hatred of God. You would expect her to tremble before God.  
Instead, she set her heart on the execution of God's prophet.
3. Hearing of Jezebel's intention to put Elijah to death he fled to Beersheba and then into the wilderness. He sat under a juniper tree and asked God to take his life. His anguish was not so much because of Jezebel's threat but because of the hardness of Israel. He had been sent as God's prophet and he had no greater success than his fathers before him.
4. From his place in the wilderness God sent him to Horeb, the mountain of God, the place of meeting. Horeb is synonymous with Mount Sinai. Arriving at Horeb Elijah lodged in a cave and there God met him. Some believe the cave was the “cleft of the rock” where God showed Moses a portion of His glory.  
**Exodus 33:21-22 NAU** - "Then the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand *there* on the rock; <sup>22</sup> and it will come about, while My glory is passing by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with My hand until I have passed by."
5. God asks Elijah, “What are you doing here?”
  - a. Some interpret this as a rebuke. “Why are you here?”  
Rather, God is dealing graciously with Elijah. The question is more like, “What can I do for you?”

- b. Elijah declares the terrible spiritual darkness covering Israel. He renews his complaint of Israel's rejection of God's covenant. He felt he alone had maintained faithfulness to God. What could be done to bring about restoration and reform?
6. From the cave Elijah was given Divine direction.  
**1 Kings 19:11 NAU** – “Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD.”  
 Elijah found himself in the presence of God – And behold, the LORD was passing by!”  
 Elijah was bemoaning the spiritual collapse in Israel. What can be done in such times? He expected God to respond with a thunderous display of His glory—a repeat of the amazing display at Mount Carmel. Perhaps if God gave an even greater display of His power all Israel would turn back to God and Ahab and Jezebel would be silenced.
7. This is what we sometimes expect. If only God would do something wonderful. If only He would once and for all destroy the wickedness upon the earth and bring about a great awakening.
- A. We expect God to blow upon the earth like a rushing wind – blowing away the corruption. Elijah saw such a mighty blowing—but God was not in the wind.  
**1 Kings 19:11 NAU** – “And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD was not in the wind.”
- B. We expect a terrible earthquake – the rending of rocks and collapsing of mountains.  
 This was Isaiah's hope:  
**Isaiah 64:1-3 NAU** – “Oh, that You would rend the heavens *and* come down, That the mountains might quake at Your presence-- <sup>2</sup> As fire kindles the brushwood, as fire causes water to boil–To make Your name known to Your adversaries, *That* the nations may tremble at Your presence! <sup>3</sup> When You did awesome things which we did not expect, You came down, the mountains quaked at Your presence.”  
 But God was not in the earthquake.  
**1 Kings 19:11 NAU** – “And after the wind an earthquake, *but* the LORD was not in the earthquake.”
- C. Perhaps if God would come like a raging fire, consuming and burning away all of the corruption before our eyes. But God is not in the fire.  
**1 Kings 19:12 NAU** – “After the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD was not in the fire”
- D. Is God absent? Does He not know? Does He not care? Elijah received the answer, and so do we.  
**1 Kings 19:12 NAU** – “and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.”  
**1 Kings 19:12 ESV** – “And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.”  
**1 Kings 19:12 KJV** – “and after the fire a still small voice.”
8. We have before us a Theophany, a physical manifestation of God that is meant to be significant, powerful contrast to the wind, earthquake, and fire. Yes, God is in the powerful displays of nature and yes, He often moves in powerful crushing ways, yet He manifests Himself most clearly in His Word. His Word is a powerful, two-edged sword.  
**Hebrews 4:12 NAU** – “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

9. We shouldn't read too much into this text, but we also shouldn't miss the contrast. God's Word shouts forth in a thundering whisper—a still small voice. It is far more powerful than mighty miracles and displays of power.
- I. There are many today who fail to see the sufficiency of Scripture
- A. Many are still seeking outward signs and miracles
1. Miracles, signs and wonders served a particular function in the Bible. God used them as validation during great epochs in redemptive history when God spoke directly through Divine revelation.
    - a. Moses performed miracles in Egypt to validate his calling as the messenger and spokesman of God.
    - b. Now with the arrival of Elijah, God is announcing judgment upon a rebellious people. We'll witness many miracles from Elijah and his protégé, Elisha.
    - c. The New Testament was another turning point and the apostles were validated by the miracles that they did by the hand of God.
    - d. Signs and miracles accompanied the earthly ministry of Christ.
  2. The extraordinary and miraculous gifts passed with the Apostolic age.
    - a. This has been the consistent teaching by those of the reformed tradition. *Sola Scriptura* remains an important tenet.
    - b. These include John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Owen, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, Benjamin Warfield.  
B.B. Warfield – “These gifts were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the Church. They necessarily passed away with the apostolic age.”<sup>1</sup>  
Jonathan Edwards – “Theses extra gifts were given in order to the founding and establishing of the church in the world. But since the canon of Scripture has been completed, and the church fully founded and established, these extraordinary gifts have ceased.”<sup>2</sup>
  3. It is also consistent with our Confession of Faith – 1:1 – “those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.”
- B. Today the Word of God is powerful and sufficient
- Hebrews 4:12 NAU** - "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."
1. Some are not satisfied with God's Word. They demand more. They crave the sensational. Music has replaced preaching in many of today's churches. They call it contemporary worship, implying you have to keep up with the times. People don't care for preaching. We need to be seeker friendly.

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<sup>1</sup> William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary on Mark*: (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 690.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

2. God's Word is sufficient. It always will be.  
**Isaiah 55:10-11 NAU** - "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; <sup>11</sup> So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it."
3. There is no need today to authenticate the Word of God through supernatural signs. God's Word by His Spirit authenticates itself.
3. The Gospel message alone is powerful

II. God has given us the perfect measure of truth.

**Psalms 19:7-8 NAU** - "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. <sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes."

- A. The Bible is the absolute measure of truth and is used of God to equip His saints.  
**2 Timothy 3:16-4:1 NAU** - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
  1. Some have interpreted this "still small voice" to mean God whispers in our minds—that He speaks to us individually and gives us individual direction. You have to listen to the "still small voice."
  2. This isn't how God speaks to us. God speaks through His Word.  
**Verse 12** is difficult to translate and the KJV adds confusion. This passage is actually speaking of a profound silence—a powerful sound of silence. NASB – "a sound of a gentle blowing."
  3. The Holy Spirit powerfully and effectually applies His Word. The Word of God goes forth like the thunder from Mount Sinai – and yet, it is a quiet testimony.  
God makes His will known clearly and loudly through His Word.
- B. The Bible is sufficient
  1. Today, we often take for granted the great gift of God's Word. We also take for granted its great power.
  2. Elijah was distraught over the idolatry and apostasy of Israel. He was sent forth as God's prophet.
    - a. God worked a great and mighty miracle at Mount Carmel. Fire came down from heaven. Elijah fully expected this to change the hearts of the people.  
**1 Kings 18:37 NAU** - "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and *that* You have turned their heart back again."
    - b. But this was not sufficient to change Ahab, and it did not change Jezebel. Most important, it did not bring lasting change to Israel.

- c. So now Elijah wishes for more.  
God is telling him that it wasn't for lack of miraculous works.
  - God would not be in the mighty wind
  - He would not be in the great earthquake
  - And don't expect a raging fire the convert their heart.
- d. God works in a way that most dismiss.  
"and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing."

### III. God works in ways often unseen

- A. He works through the powerful transforming work of the Gospel
  - 1. The Holy Spirit takes His Word and presses it upon the heart of the sinner
  - 2. Jesus described it to Nicodemus  
**John 3:8 NAU** - "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
- B. God also works in His fiery judgments
  - 1. These too are often working in the background
  - 2. This is also a part of this passage.  
Israel rejected the mighty fire from heaven.  
Now God will move upon them in judgment  
**1 Kings 19:15-17 NAU** - "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; <sup>16</sup> and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. <sup>17</sup> "It shall come about, the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall put to death."
  - 3. Little did they know that judgment was at the door

### Conclusion:

- 1. We can carry forth the Word of God with great confidence today. It is powerful. It is sufficient because God is in it.
- 2. We should note, it wasn't the wind or the earthquake or the fire that stirred Elijah, but the sound of the gentle blowing. Why? Because God was there.
- 3. We should also note that God spoke from Mount Sinai in thunder and lightning and a shaking earthquake. This was the nature of the Law as it thunders upon the conscience. But then the Gospel comes as a still small voice.  
**Hebrews 12:18-25 NAU** - "For you have not come to *a mountain* that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, <sup>19</sup> and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which *sound was such that* those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them. <sup>20</sup> For they could not bear the command, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned." <sup>21</sup> And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, "I am full of fear and trembling." <sup>22</sup> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, <sup>23</sup> to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *the* righteous made perfect, <sup>24</sup> and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel. <sup>25</sup> See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking."