

Sermon Text – Sunday, August 12, 2018 – Pastor Paula Kraus

“Let’s Talk About Depression”

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:1-18

Some of this scripture is undoubtedly familiar to us, it tells of Elijah hearing the voice of God in a whisper. This scripture gives us some guidance on a couple topics that I will address however it also gives us guidance about our need to listen for God’s direction and responding to it.

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Now, however, we see that Elijah was tired and despondent – depressed. Depression can strike even when things seem to be going great. Maybe Elijah suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress but for whatever reason, Elijah needed to stop and take a break.

So let’s talk about depression. It seems to be a topic greatly avoided by Christians. Christians don’t get depressed do they?

Is that what you believe? I think you’re wrong. When I read this bit of scripture I see Elijah, a prophet very close to God, in the midst of depression. We see that in verse four when, after fleeing Jezebel for a day, he sits down gives up and says, “enough, take my life.”

But what is God’s response? God sends an angel to comfort and care for Elijah. God did not abandon Elijah in his despair. God did not say “Get over it”. God provided comfort.

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We read in verse ten that Elijah is distraught and depressed because the Israelites have rejected the covenant and had turned to the Baal worshippers. Jezebel had put the prophets of Israel to death and he fears that she will have him put to death also.

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We don’t know what to do about depression in ourselves, and frequently in others. Is depression a sign of weak faith? Are those who become depressed spiritually flawed? Was Elijah spiritually flawed?

We can read some things into this passage about Elijah’s relationship with God. We see that when the Lord spoke to Elijah, he responded. Elijah, even though he was tired and didn’t want to go on, did what the Lord instructed. He trusted God for the direction he needed. We see that God provided just enough for the journey, provided encouragement and reassurance when it was needed and provided a companion to help Elijah for the work ahead.

Sometimes in depression we don’t know what to do, we are frozen with indecision and fatigue. We don’t know what to do next so we do nothing, we sleep – neglect ourselves and others. We don’t eat or we eat the wrong types of food, and our chores don’t get done. We can become so stuck that we don’t care if we live or die, we just stop living. In the GriefShare program that the Valley Clergy supports, we tell people that it is important to do just the ‘next thing’ – whatever is in front of you, one thing at a time.

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Remember, God never said we would not be troubled, and God never said we would not be tempted, God never said we would not be distressed but, God also never said we would be overcome with trouble and not comforted. Jesus continually warned his disciples that they would suffer for him, not MIGHT suffer, but would. When the world has us down, we can cry out to Jesus to GOD. His grace / God's grace is sufficient for all our needs. Jesus provides a place of comfort and rest, Jesus provides companions for when the work is too difficult to face on our own. That is one of the main functions of church. We can actually worship God in solitude, Monks do it, but we lose fellowship when we don't participate in the Christian community of a Church. We lose the encouragement and nourishment that we receive from the angels of the Lord that are present in the Church. Most of the people in this world who suffer from depression also suffer from isolation, God created us to be in relationship with each other not to live solitary lives. We need partners, each other, fellow Christians, family to help us navigate the storms of our lives.

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We can read some things into this passage about Elijah’s relationship with God. We see that when the Lord spoke to Elijah, he responded. Elijah, even though he was tired and didn’t want to go on, did what the Lord instructed. He trusted God for the direction he needed. We see that God provided just enough for the journey, provided encouragement and reassurance when it was needed and provided a companion to help Elijah for the work ahead.

Sometimes in depression we don’t know what to do, we are frozen with indecision and fatigue. We don’t know what to do next so we do nothing, we sleep – neglect ourselves and others. We don’t eat or we eat the wrong types of food, and our chores don’t get done. We can become so stuck that we don’t care if we live or die, we just stop living. In the GriefShare program that the Valley Clergy supports, we tell people that it is important to do just the ‘next thing’ – whatever is in front of you, one thing at a time.

That is what God was helping Elijah with – the next thing. God provided the care and instruction which helped Elijah get up and go back to work, but only because Elijah listened. He listened because he had faith that when he cried out to God, God would listen and respond. It took more than God’s display of power, it took more than silence, Elijah needed to hear God’s words of encouragement – it was only then that Elijah was moved to act. For someone in depression it may take more than feeling the thunderous display of God’s power, it may take a voice breaking the silence with encouraging words.

Nearly everyone gets depressed from time to time. That feeling of emptiness, exhaustion, and meaninglessness is universal. Solomon talks about it in the book of Ecclesiastes 1:2, “Meaningless! Meaningless! says the teacher, Utterly meaningless! Everything is Meaningless.”

There are no easy answers, some people get so lost in their depression more help is needed.

One thing we can remember is that God is with us, we can cry out and he will be beside us. We can get angry and shake our fists and he will remain beside us. God pursues us even when we try to hide from him.

Remember, God never said we would not be troubled, and God never said we would not be tempted, God never said we would not be distressed but, God also never said we would be overcome with trouble and not comforted. Jesus continually warned his disciples that they would suffer for him, not MIGHT suffer, but would. When the world has us down, we can cry out to Jesus to GOD. His grace / God's grace is sufficient for all our needs. Jesus provides a place of comfort and rest, Jesus provides companions for when the work is too difficult to face on our own. That is one of the main functions of church. We can actually worship God in solitude, Monks do it, but we lose fellowship when we don't participate in the Christian community of a Church. We lose the encouragement and nourishment that we receive from the angels of the Lord that are present in the Church. Most of the people in this world who suffer from depression also suffer from isolation, God created us to be in relationship with each other not to live solitary lives. We need partners, each other, fellow Christians, family to help us navigate the storms of our lives.

When people ask me why is Church important – that is what I tell them. Church is important because it is where we are fed the things God intends for our lives.

Think about Elijah encountering God on Mount Horeb in a whisper and remember that God is revealed not only through magnificent natural events but also through the lives and words of those who work and speak on behalf of God. The Church works and speaks on behalf of God. Come to Church and find God!

Who is your life whispering to?