

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SUNDAY – JULY 17, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

1 Kings 19:1-13

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION UPDATED EDITION

¹ Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.”

³ Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.”

⁵ Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.” ⁶ He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, “Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you.” ⁸ He got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food *forty days and forty nights* to Horeb the **mount of God**. ⁹ At that place he came to a cave and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” ¹⁰ He answered, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

¹¹ He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of *sheer silence*. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

1 Kings. The book of 1 Kings is considered one of the books of history in the Bible. It provides an account of the death of David, the reign of his son Solomon, and the decline and division of the Kingdom of Israel after Solomon and many of his successors turned to idol worship. It also recounts the ministry of the prophet Elijah among the northern ten tribes of Israel.

Ahab & Jezebel – Ahab was the King of Israel in the time of Elijah the prophet. Together with his wife Jezebel they were considered the worst of the worst of the bad monarchs, principally for leading the Israelite people to idolatry and the worship of other gods. Just before our passage today Elijah has had a huge power encounter prophet smack-down with the prophets of Baal supported by the monarchs.

forty days and forty nights:: this recalls the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness by the Egyptians from their enslavement in Egypt until they arrived in the Promised Land. The 40 days of rain in the story of Noah and the ark in Genesis 7:11-12. The 40 days of temptation and fasting Jesus endured at the beginning of his ministry. Mark 1:12-13

mount of God:: The word mountain in Hebrew is *harar*. One went to the mountains to draw close to God. Some examples include: Exodus 3 (burning bush); Exodus 24 (Moses receives the stone tablets). See also Haggai 1:6-8 and Isaiah 55:11-12.

sound :: קול Pronounced /kol/ meaning sound or voice (human, animal or divine)

sheer :: דק pronounced /dak/ meaning thin, small, fine.

silence:: דממה pronounced /demamah/ meaning still, silence, or whisper.

Some translators translate *sheer silence* as *quiet whisper*. The poetic point is that that whisper or silence where God is, is unexpected; the opposite of the noise of the wind, earthquake and fire.

¹ “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father’s house there are many *dwelling places*. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare A PLACE for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the **WAY** to the place where I am going.” ⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. *How can we know the way?*” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the **WAY** and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- How have you experienced God in your life? More like the silence after the wind or in relationship with Jesus?
- How are you open to experiencing God or hearing God’s voice? How or where are you “closed off” to that? Why?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – *or to us, as a church* – to act, speak, be, or change, through this word of scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

John The gospel of John tells the story of the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Today’s selection is a teaching unique to the gospel of John, not recorded in the other three gospels.

Believe :: πίστις pronounced /pistis/ meaning: the conviction of the truth of anything, belief, trust || to believe, to trust, to have faith in. It seems to imply a relationship.

dwelling places:: μονή pronounced /moné/ meaning: a staying, abiding, dwelling, abode. Most scholars believe this word represents for or a night-stop or resting place for a traveler on a journey than a room in a palatial mansion.

A PLACE :: τόπος pronounced /topos/ meaning: the/a place. It’s used in Revelation 12:8 to indicate the vision that in the last days there will be no place for evil in the heavens. Some scholars also compare this to the role of Jesus in going to prepare a place for his disciples in Hebrews 6:20 which says that Jesus has gone into the inner shrine of the heavenly temple “as a forerunner on our behalf.”

the **WAY** :: ὁδός pronounced /hodos/ meaning a road; by implication, a progress (the route, act or distance); figuratively, a mode or means:— journey, (high-)way. Metaphorically it means is spoken of the way in which an action is spoken of proceeding from something/-one, ὁδός denotes a course of conduct, a way (i. e. manner) of thinking, feeling, deciding. It seems that the relationship between these three words means either that “the **WAY** of Jesus leads then to Truth and Life” or that “the **WAY** and truth of Jesus leads to Life.” Most scholars think the former, that Jesus is the way of which truth and life are explanations. The truth is the manifested divine reality known in Jesus and the life is that reality shared by human beings.

In Acts 9:1-2 we learn that followers of Jesus (what we call Christians) we’re first called **THE PEOPLE OF THE WAY**.

This phrasing calls to memory a poetic prophetic word from Isaiah 40:3-5:

³ A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare **THE WAY** of the Lord; make straight in the desert a **HIGHWAY** for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

How can we know the way? – Thomas’ question seems to echo that of Peter in John 13:36 concerning destination. [³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.”] He seems to be asking Jesus “if we do not know the destination, how can we know the way?”