



AT HOME SERVICE

Sunday 9th August 2026

compiled by Alison Morgan - Local Preacher

God calls us to grow in faith and love.
Growing often brings storms: expected and unexpected.
We can be fearful that we can't cope.
We may find it difficult to hear God's gentle voice.
We call out in our distress: 'Lord, save me!'
But God is always with us.

Hymn 495 StF

1] Dear Lord and Father of mankind
Forgive our foolish ways;
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives Thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.

2] In simple trust like theirs who heard,
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.

3] O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love!

4] With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of Thy call,
As noiseless let Thy blessings fall
As fell Thy Manna down.

5] Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace.

6] Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and Thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm!

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892)

Let us pray

Almighty God, you are found in the middle of our storms, calm and reassuring.
The winds and flames do not overcome you.
You are the voice that bids us step forth in faith, and the hand outstretched to save when we falter.
We adore you for all that you are;
Our shelter, our safe haven, our anchor.

Lord, many are the storms that surround us.
There are political storms within our world, and our nation;
Humanity is tossed to and fro by conflict, need and want.
There are storms within our families, and within ourselves;

We disagree, we fight, we wound one another;
We do not know which way to turn.
Our weather has changed; all over the world
We witness changes in the heat, causing fires as we have never seen before.
In the face of all this, we confess our fear, our lack of courage, our faltering faith.
You tell us to trust in you, but we are battered by danger and doubts, fears within and fears without.
We fall, we are overwhelmed. We fail.
Help us Lord, to fix our eyes on you.
Great is your faithfulness and saving grace.
Your love is constant, and forgiving, how wonderful your outstretched hand, along life's stormy ways, is always there.

The Lord's Prayer

Reading - Kings 19 vs. 9-18

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?' 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'.
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, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheet silence. 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?' 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'. Then the Lord said to him, 'Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel, and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill, and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.

Reflection

In these craggy old stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, we may find ourselves arrested by a word, or a sentence, the sound of a human voice. We might hear a question that, over the centuries, still comes to us as if we too are personally addressed. A question which is as up to date as breaking news. Such is the word of God to Elijah.

The hero of the story has been through astonishing adventures. But just now, after what he sees as failure and persecution, he is no longer heroic. He's tired and depressed. Now he no longer has any desire for his life to continue – it's so hard.

Elijah retreats into a cave. All he can do is lick his wounds and sulk, alone, in darkness. Darkness all around him, darkness inside him. But God is still interested in Elijah. The 'word of the Lord' comes to him. 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' 'I'm desperate', Elijah replies, 'I'm the only one left'.
And God says, 'Go out, stand on the mountain.... I'm about to pass by.' Elijah stays where he is.

Do you recognize this feeling, this response, where you have a sign of hope, where a calling presents itself and you stay where you are? It's just too hard.

But God puts on a personal firework show for Elijah. A wind that's right off the Beaufort scale, a wind that breaks rocks into shrapnel. Elijah stays where he is. An earthquake, then a fire. He stays inside the cave. Elijah, for all his misery, knows what he is looking for. And he knows it is not in power, dazzling accomplishment or violence. What he is looking for is something he will recognize: the living connection, the listening, the face. And now here it comes. After the fire. After the show has come to an end. In the cave, in his heart, a thin voice of silence, a sound of sheer silence, a still small voice.

I don't know what that voice whispered, but, as soon as Elijah heard it, he wrapped his cloak around his face. He went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And God says again, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' Now he answers. Elijah says what he said before. He hasn't got anything new to say, but now he is in an entirely different place. He hears God in the centre, the silent place within his heart.

What was he doing, the first time, was despairing. What he is doing now is listening. 'What are you doing? What is just one of the questions we are asked by God. There might be other questions to come. Why? Who? When? But what comes first.

What is always a question about attention. What can you see? What do you know? It's always about perception: what is really happening What is this place

In this moment Elijah is seen by God, and in that seeing he begins to see himself. Before this moment, all he could see was the complexity and futility of his life. But in the silence, he begins to find himself, to find himself accompanied, and something rises in him. Something causes him to rise up and respond, awkwardly, tentatively, covering his face, but responding to the one who comes to meet him.

It's still astounding, after all these years. It still holds true, the very idea that God could address us individually, as if we were significant, as if we were precious.

And such a question already creates its own deep answer.

We are people listening to the voice of God in the depths of our being, so we begin to understand our meaning and our direction and know that we are loved. Amen

Let us pray

Lord, God, we pray for all those people for whom taking risks is a way of life.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for our emergency services – paramedics, the police, the fire service – all who daily face difficult situations as they seek to help to protect us and make our world a safer and more peaceful place.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for people who work in troubled areas – the armed forces in war zones, those who bring humanitarian aid into areas of natural disasters, and many more.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe.

We pray for people who take risks in your name, Lord Jesus – those who take your word where it is most needed – and for people who grapple with faith and doubt.

Lord, reveal yourself to them and keep them safe. Amen

Hymn 673 StF

1] Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
Will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown
In you and you in me?

2] Will you leave yourself behind
If I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
And never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
In you and you in me?

3] Will you let the blinded see
If I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
And never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
And do such as this unseen,
And admit to what I mean
In you and you in me?

Blessing

Lord, help us to hear your voice.
In the week ahead may the world and its problems decrease as you increase in our lives.
Keep us focused on your way, looking ahead and trusting you. Amen

4] Will you love the 'you' you hide
If I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
And never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
To reshape the world around,
Through my sight and touch and sound
In you and you in me?

5] Lord, your summons echoes true
When you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
And never be the same.
In your company I'll go
Where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In you and you in me.

*John L. Bell (b. 1949)
& Graham Maule (1958 - 2019)*