

March 27, 2020

Dear friends,

Well another week has passed and we are becoming very aware that life is changing for all of us. One begins to wonder if it can ever go back to what it was. However there are some bright spots in all of this. We are seeing a sharp decrease in pollution which points to the fact that we could clean up this planet if we were truly motivated to do so. We are also keenly aware of how much each of us is connected in this world and how much we rely on each other despite race, creed or colour. We are, of course, keenly aware of how much need we have of social interaction, now that it is absent from our lives.

There have been times in my life that I lamented humanities reliance on technology. That's changed for me. I see how blessed we are to be able to be together through technology. This week we had a video chat with our family; all three households on the screen at the same time. What a gift! We miss being physically together, but this helps a great deal. All over the world we see people making the best of a very difficult situation. The same can be said of our community of faith. I have been talking to some of our senior members by phone. I begin by asking how they are managing in this difficult time. The usual answer I receive is, "I'm doing fine and how are you doing?" Such resilient folks. Bless them!

I wanted to share with you an ancient story that was brought to mind for me by an acquaintance recently (David Macintyre). It is part of the story of Elijah from 1 Kings. Israel is ruled by an evil King, Ahab. You may be more familiar with his wife's name, Jezebel. She was not particularly pleasant either. She had actually ordered the death of many of Israel's prophets. To make a long story a little shorter, you need to know that God called upon Elijah to get the people back to God and away from the worship of Baal which was spreading like a deadly sickness throughout the land. He was very successful and this enraged Jezebel. She sent a message to Elijah that she was going to hunt him down and kill him.

"May the Gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you."

With this, Elijah self quarantined himself, fleeing into the wilderness and hiding in a cave.

Elijah found it difficult to be shut up, away from others, fearful that the wrath of Jezebel, which was like a sickness. You see Elijah had seen the pestilence of evil that had spread everywhere and done great harm. He knew he might be next. I am sure that he prayed feverishly during that time of isolation. It was in his mind when he was awake and when he slept. He might have wondered if God had forgotten and abandoned him.

It was then that God spoke to him.

"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance to the cave. 1 Kings 19:11

What can we learn from this story, for our time?

The voice of God does not come in the barrage of media reports, health care pronouncements or political squabbling. As important as they may be, we need to remember that it was in the quiet of his isolation that Elijah heard that "still small voice", a whisper from God.

Of course we don't know what God said to Elijah, but we do know that he emerged from cave renewed and went back to face his trials. You should know that he was eventually victorious.

This story can speak to us in the midst of our trial. Powerful voices continue to issue directives and warnings. Pay attention and do the right thing, but don't forget to listen for the voice of God. You will need to turn off the media and for a moment, stop the noise and go to a quiet place and pray.

Here you will find peace, hope and the voice of the one who says, "I am with you always. My peace I give you. You are loved more than you know.

I am praying for those attempting to control this virus.

I am praying for those who care for those afflicted by the virus.

I am praying for patience, education, compassion and caring.

I am praying for you and those you love.

Please join me in praying for God's presence, strength and guidance. This challenging time will come to an end; we will adjust and become wiser.

Remember the words from our creed, "We are not alone, God is with us).

Blessings, Rick

For your information here are the Links to area Community Outreach Covid-19 updates.

Niagara-on-the-Lake: <http://www.notl.com/COVID-19>

St. Catharines: <https://www.stcatharines.ca/en/livein/covid-19.asp#>

Niagara Falls: <https://niagarafalls.ca/covid19>