



Kaurihohore Historic Church

P O Box 4118, Kamo, Whangārei 0141



Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 19 June 2022 – Pentecost 2

Our service today has been prepared by Rosalie Gwilliam, one of our Lay Preachers

Welcome

Call to Worship

We come as children of God

We come, unsure where to seek God's presence.

The wind blows,

But God is not in the wind.

The earth quakes,

But God is not in the earthquake.

The fire burns,

But God is not in the flame.

There is nothing but utter stillness.

God is there in the silence.

In silence we will wait for God.

God is with us now.

(Silence)

Song TIS 703: As the Deer Pants

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBppKZ0eJIQ> (based on Psalm 42: 1-2)

Prayer

Come, O God, be with us here. As much as a deer longs for streams of cool water, we long to know that you are with us.

When trouble and sorrow come, we need you.

Help us remember that you are always with us, and that your love is steadfast.

Put your song into our hearts, that we may praise you this day. Amen

Prayer of Centring and Renewal

Let us pray

God of mystery, open our eyes to look for you in unfamiliar places; open our ears to hear you call us in the sound of sheer silence; open our hearts to feel the depth of your love.

When we wander in the wilderness of fear and death, revive us with your care, that we may find strength for the journey back to the land of hope and life. Amen

Psalm 42 and 43 (selection)

As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.

I thirst for God, the living God.

When can I go and stand before him?

Why am I discouraged?

Why am I sad?

I will put my hope in God!

I will praise him again – my Saviour and my God.

Each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life.

‘O God my rock,’ I cry, ‘Why have you forgotten me?’

Why am I discouraged?

Why am I sad?

I will put my hope in God!

I will praise him again – my Saviour and my God.

You are God, my only safe haven. Why have you tossed me aside?

Send out your light and your truth: let them guide me.

Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the place where you live.

There I will go to the altar of God, to God – the source of all my joy.

I will praise you with my harp, O God, my God!

Why am I discouraged?

Why am I sad?

I will put my hope in God!

I will praise him again – my Saviour and my God.

The steadfast love of God is evident throughout the readings today. Elijah becomes the expression of resolute and determined faith, an example rewarded by God carrying him to safety.

The psalmist has reminded us that throughout times of distress and dark nights of the soul, God is ever present. The promise of belonging to Christ is echoed in the healing of the Geresene demoniac who Jesus instructs to share how much God has done for him.

Scripture readings

1 Kings 19: 1-4, 8-15

(page 555)

Luke 8: 26-39

(page 1609)

What is Your Name?

B D Prewer

He comes as one unknown upon our rocky shore
planting no imperious boot, just asking 'what is your name?'

He comes as one unsought among our mobbing fears
not stamping any foot; just asking: 'What is your name?'

He comes as one unlikely between the powerful voices
not pushing any code: just asking 'What is your name?'

He comes as one unfeared through crowded judgements
offering no added burden; assuring 'What is your name?'

He comes as one unconfined midst our imprisonments,
imposing no new fetters, saying 'What is your name?'

He comes as one unafraid among our cold, grey tombs
where scant hopes remain; treasuring each one's name.

Reflection

Now, let's jump into the story of the prophet Elijah, an effective spokesperson for God and yet a very human being – just like us! In 1 Kings 19 we enter the story right after Elijah has enraged Queen Jezebel by killing 'all Baal's prophets with the sword' after the thrilling contest of the God's in chapter 18.

How must Elijah have felt after God humiliated Baal's gang of prophets so utterly? Think of the divine power Elijah witnessed – and the violent death he caused. How might he have felt? I wonder if there has ever been a movie made of this story?

But the situation changes rapidly for Elijah as Jezebel sends a messenger with a dispatch that echoes a solemn pledge of the time – it's a clear death threat.

We can note that King Ahab has clearly been put in his place by his furious wife, Jezebel, who gets all the screen time here, chewing the scenery as she calls for revenge against this problematic prophet. She wants him dead! Naturally, Elijah is terrified.

Without waiting for God to give him any direction for what to do next, Elijah runs for his life to Beer-sheba, which is about as far south as you can go in Israel. He leaves his 'assistant' there – perhaps hoping that he would stop the approaching assassins. Then Elijah goes on another days journey into the desert – finally stopping under a lonely bush – and gives up. He is exhausted by his exertions and his terror. Begging God for the liberation of death, he falls into a troubled sleep of depression.

A messenger of a different sort than Jezebel awakens Elijah. Jezebel's messenger brought death; this messenger brings nourishment – life. 'Get up' this messenger says with a nudge. 'Eat something'. And there is sustenance right in front of Elijah, which he enjoys then falls back to sleep. The same thing happens again – presumably Elijah isn't quite ready yet – except this time the messenger adds a reason: because you have a difficult road ahead of you.

This time Elijah is refreshed enough to take off for Mount Herob. It's a 40 day and night journey, covering some two hundred miles or more, to the mountain that Moses spent 40 days on, the mountain of covenant between Israel and God. Spending the night there in a cave, Elijah hears God ask him 'Why are you here Elijah?' How do you imagine God's tone here: Taunting? Compassionate? Elijah has a self-defensive, self-aggrandizing, self-pitying, speech all ready to go, about how he has served God and even so he's about to get killed. It's not fair.

God beckons Elijah out of the cave to stand up, for 'the Lord is passing by' – another echo of Moses' experience on Sanai. Then follows in order, a violent wind, a rocking earthquake, and a roaring fire. Some scholars suggest that such violent activity was attributed to Baal, so that God here distinguishes Godself from the pagan god; but examples can be found of Israel's God acting in the wind, earthquake and fire in other texts, including Kings. Not this time, however. This time God is found in a sound – thin – quiet. The word for sound is also translated as voice in this reading from 1 Kings. It's the comforting, compassionate voice of God, a sound that requires intentionality to hear. We must be listening for this still small voice, speaking our name, or we will miss it in the loud and intrusive noise of life.

Elijah responds to this sound in humility, or perhaps humiliation, by wrapping his face in his cloak. Then for the second time in this particular text, the same event occurs again, as a quiet voice asks, 'Why are you here Elijah? This time the prophet responds with the very same speech as before. Has he learned nothing from his astounding encounter with God? Perhaps he just needs time to process it all.

But God can't wait. In Elijah's deepest crisis, God had to drag him aside and make him listen, and he is sent on another mission to anoint kings and a successor prophet, Elisha. God demands that Elijah put his questions, his fears, his self-pity aside, and get to work. That is one bold challenge! No doubt a sequel is coming!

I can identify with Elijah in this text – not that any queen has issued a vendetta on my life, that I know of, but I have certainly felt as though an enemy – life – is chasing me, and I try to run as far away as I can.

I wonder if you have ever felt this way. Responsibilities often press in on us from all sides. Even when we do what we know God has called us to do in championing the righteousness of God in the midst of a godless culture, next thing we know we are huddled under a little bush, terrified, angry with God over the unfairness of it all.

Do we get so busy justifying ourselves, as Elijah did, that we fail to seek God in all this? It's so easy to do. One thing that encourages me in this reading from Kings is that, on two occasions God, or God's messenger gives Elijah the same message, and even then it's not clear that Elijah gets it. This gives me hope, because I too can be terribly dense when it comes to hearing God's word for me, let alone obeying it.

What are some of the ways this can play out in our lives? What violent distractions can keep our ears shut from God's voice? How can we prepare ourselves when God speaks our name, and calls us to go about doing as God commands, even when we still feel overwhelmed by the clatter and noise around us?

As we see, it takes time and intentionality to hear our name in the thin, quiet, sound of God's voice. We must get out of our own heads, overcome distractions of the wind, earthquakes and fire, all around us in this world, and listen, and then obey God's direction to go back to our holy work whether we understand everything or not, whether we are ready or not.

You and me and Elijah are all seeking to serve the same God, and despite a few regional differences we all do so in service of the same hostile world. You and me and Elijah are all going to experience more than our fair share of bruises and burns as God calls our name to serve in the world.

And you and me and Elijah are all going to need to spend time enveloped in the sound of sheer silence if we are going to have the depth and resources to serve the world without being left shrivelled up and cast aside. Don't wait until it hurts too much before you sink your roots into our gracious God in the sound of sheer silence.

Offering Dedication

Generous God, you are always with us, always caring for us, always drawing us together,

we are grateful for your loving presence.

We bring our gifts before you today, that this offering may reach out in love to your people everywhere. Amen

Hymn: Sing Praise and Thanksgiving

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_VXaVtBnmKU

Prayer for Others

Loving God, you speak in many ways, at different times and in different places. Help us to listen and discern the wisdom in your message.

You care for all people,

Help us to care for others

For the poor and downtrodden –

for the prisoner and the homeless

foster children, and other children living in unsuitable and unsafe homes,

you require justice.

May we hold our leadership accountable.

May we be ready to speak up about unjust practices.

May we demand justice for all rather than just for ourselves.

Gracious God, we pray for these things in your name. Amen

Hymn HFTC 450: How Good is the God We Adore

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbLNVAIqumI>

Benediction

In the spirit of God's unchanging love, live the stories of faith we have heard today.

In the melody of God's song within us, sing the faith we have received this day.

In the hope of God's unfailing help, share the grace we have touched this day.

Go and tell the world how much God has done for us!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the companionship of the Holy Spirit be with us all

Sung Amen