

Sermon Series for LENT
“Listen: Hearing That Still, Small Voice and Finding Your Own”
LENT 1 “Finding Your Cave: Listening Spaces”

Message by DD Adams
Providence Kemptown U.M. Church
1st SUNDAY IN LENT
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The Old Testament lesson for today, the 1st Sunday of Lent, is 1st Kings 19: 11-12. When King Ahab tells his wife Jezebel about the prophet Elijah killing all of *her* prophets, she’s—not—happy. So Jezebel sends a message to Elijah: “Let the gods kill me if I fail to do to you what you did to my prophets by this time tomorrow.”

The Psalm reading is chapter 5, verses 3-7. In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly. I, by your great love, can come into your house; in reverence I bow down toward your holy temple.

The gospel lesson is Mark 1:14-15. After John the Baptist was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

This is God’s word for God’s people. Please pray with me. You call us this morning to listen, O God, we’re mindful of your presence. In our search for wholeness we place our hope in you as we move forward on our spiritual journey. We’re grateful for the journey God, and ask your blessing on the reading, hearing,

and understanding of your word today. Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of our heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! I want to give a summary of chapter 19 in our 1st Kings reading to know what's happened in the Prophet Elijah's life. Elijah is hiding in the wilderness and sits down under a tree. He tells the Lord he thinks it's about time he dies, but then he falls asleep. An angel wakes him up and tells him to eat.

Elijah finds a cake and some water next to him, and he eats and drinks before he falls asleep again. The angel comes to wake him a second time and tells him, "You'd better eat up, or you won't have the energy to make the journey you're about to go on."

Elijah wakes up and eats again. He then heads off to Horeb, or Sinai, the mountain of God. He doesn't eat anything for forty days and forty nights during his journey. Finally, he arrives at Horeb. He finds a cave to sleep in. In the cave, the Lord's voice comes to him and asks, "What are you doing Elijah?"

Elijah explains, "I've been really loyal to you Lord. But the Israelites are breaking *your* covenants and tearing down *your* altars and killing *your* prophets. I'm the only one left and now they're trying to kill me, so I'm hiding out here."

The Lord tells Elijah to go stand on the mountain, because the Lord is going to be there. Before he has the chance to go out, a furious wind passes by the cave

and tears up the rocks on the mountain—but the Lord’s not in the wind. Then an earthquake comes and shakes the cave—but the Lord’s not in that either. Then a fire comes, but still no Lord. Finally, Elijah hears “a sound of sheer silence” or “a still small voice” — thin and silent.

Our key verses 11 and 12 say that Queen Jezebel, Ahab’s wife, was hot with anger. Elijah had killed all of Jezebel’s prophets, and she wants revenge. So Jezebel sends a message to Elijah: “Let the gods kill me if I fail to do to you what you did to my prophets by this time tomorrow.”

Elijah is hiding in a cave and scared to death. Only 24 hours ago he felt so victorious killing all of Jezebel’s false prophets. But now, he’s depressed, discouraged, afraid, running scared and hiding in a cave. Jezebel is out to get him. He goes from an emotional victorious high to a low and depressed state in one day.

When we’re wanting to escape from the world and our problems we do all kinds of things, but the bottom line is this. When we finally come out of the cave our problems are still with us. So here’s Elijah in a cave. Maybe trying to find God.

But God wasn’t in the strong wind that swept over the mountain in the cave. He wasn’t in the earthquake that shook the mountain or in the fire. But all those things got his attention and brought him out of the cave. Perhaps the wind, earthquake and fire showed Elijah God was still in control. But then God’s presence spoke in a still small voice. The Lord said, “What are you doing Elijah?”

Sometimes we may need to get away in order to hear that “still small voice” within. I’m wondering, where is your cave equivalent? Maybe it’s a quiet park, a secluded path deep in the woods, maybe in a rocking chair, or at a shoreline. Maybe you listen to God and feel the spirit’s presence as you walk. Maybe you journal, read, or do something artistic.

We all have to get close enough to God to find our direction and feel some hope. We have to get quiet enough for long enough to hear that still small voice. The chaos of the world can hinder our listening. To get past the noise and the distraction and into the depths of our heart where we can listen. We pray, we’re quiet and still, and we listen.

Maybe some of us go to our cave—a place of hiding from all the noise. That’s where we find solitude, and we can listen to God right in the midst of our questions. Maybe after we listen and pray, it’s then we’re readying to come out of hiding. Wherever your listening place is, go there, find solitude, pray deeply, and listen for God’s voice and his presence.

Whatever you do, lay your requests down and wait expectantly. Know that the kingdom of God is near you, right beside you as God’s spirit moves you to believe and know how much you’re loved. Amen.