



Sermon, Sunday June 11, 2023 “A Gentle Whisper”

SCRIPTURE: 1 Kings 19:9-18⁹ 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?”¹⁴ 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.”¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill.¹⁸ 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.”

Introduction: Elijah and Jezebel

Today is the second Sunday after Pentecost. The main character of today's text is the prophet, Elijah. Elijah was active in Northern Israel in the 9th century B.C. when Israel was divided into North and South. At that time, the king of Israel was ‘Ahab’, and his wife was ‘Jezebel’. King Ahab was evaluated as an evil king by the writer of Kings. **1 Kings 16:33 says: “Ahab also made an Asherah pole (One of the three major Canaanite goddesses, the wife of Baal and symbol of fertility) and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.”**

The prophet Elijah confronted King Ahab and his wicked wife, Jezebel who both hated Elijah. According to 1 Kings 19:2, 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.”**

Elijah, who felt afraid because of this, crossed the border, and fled to Beersheba in southern Judah. He left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. And he asked that he might die: **“It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.”**

However, to those who know the confrontation between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal and those who know that the drought in Israel stopped for three and a half years after Elijah fought and won the prophets of Baal, Elijah's begging to die seems strange. In fact, Elijah may have thought that if the fight against the prophets



of Baal is won and the drought ends, the Israelites will realize that God is the only true God and turn away from idolatry.

However, people's hearts did not change as easily as Elijah expected. Instead, Elijah's life is threatened by King Ahab's wife, Jezebel. Jezebel had the will and power to kill Elijah. So the fear and frustration that Elijah felt was great, and he prayed that the Lord would take his life.

In fact, we often have experiences like those of Elijah. Our economic situation becomes difficult, we lose our health completely, and when we experience extreme mental pain, we choose death. Some people make extreme choices because of the futility of human life.

In this situation, what can save Elijah and us from suffering? It is to hear the '**A Gentle Whisper**' of the Lord towards Elijah and us. In other words, it is to experience God's presence in our lives.

Body: A Gentle Whisper

The past week has been very busy for me. There was 2023 Iowa annual conference, and there was a Carnival and Summer Bible School event at Simpson Church due to the dedication of passionate church Sunday School teachers. And in Epworth Church, Greg Hardy, a faithful servant of God and a member of the church, went to heaven at the young age of 64 due to a sudden accident. Also, there are a lot of people from the Korean church going on a trip this year, so I had to spend a lot of time doing Korean church maintenance.

Monday evening, June 5th, my daughter and my wife were practicing piano for Des Moines Korean Church choir. Currently, my daughter SeoJin is volunteering for the Korean church's worship service with piano and violin.

While SeoJin was practicing piano, it sounded so beautiful, I asked her to play my favorite song, "Moon River". After my daughter's sweet piano performance, I asked her to play "Moon River" on the violin. After that, my daughter's violin playing continued for a long time. SeoJin played popular songs, Chopin, Tchaikovsky, and Mozart on the violin for me and my wife. Me, my wife, and Seojin all had a great time.

As I prepared for today's sermon, I wondered why I was so happy listening to my daughter play the violin. It was because the sound that SeoJin made when she played moved my soul. Maybe some of you think, 'You say that because You are her dad'. But to me, SeoJin's violin playing moves me more than any other professional violinist. Although SeoJin's violin performance may not be as fancy and sophisticated as that of professional violinists, SeoJin's performance has her own unique color.

The reason I share my experience at home last week with you is to think about the '**A Gentle Whisper**' Elijah heard in today's text.

Elijah, who had fled from Jezebel, ate, and rested with the help of an angel of the Lord. And he goes to a cave in Horeb, the mountain of God. At that time, the word of the Lord came to Elijah. **"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."** And there, Elijah experienced the amazing power of God.

Today's text describes the Lord passing in front of Elijah, who was in a state of discouragement. It describes as follow; **"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 there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence."** However, Elijah's heart was only afraid, but there was no emotion or grace until he heard the 'A Gentle Whisper'.



There are times when we long for the great and amazing power of the Lord in our lives. It may be political, it may be economic, it may be health. We want to experience God in a way that is God's answer to our longings.

In fact, Elijah also experienced the great and amazing power of the Lord in a confrontation with 450 prophets of Baal. However, Elijah realizes that experiencing the Lord's presence, the true power of the Lord, is not like that. He experiences God who visits him with a gentle whisper. And this experience of God heals Elijah's broken, angry, and fearful heart.

Therefore, the sound that resonates with our souls is a **'Gentle Whisper'**. We can hear a gentle whisper while reading a book or having a conversation with a friend, and we can experience it while holding a worship service. People who have this experience can live their lives with their own unique color without being swayed by others.

However, there are people who hear a gentle whisper of the Lord in our lives, and there are people who do not. Therefore, we should not miss a gentle whisper by hearing loud voices.

Conclusion: We must listen to what the Lord wants to show us and what He wants to say.

Now let's summarize today's message. When the Lord entrusted Elijah with a new mission, the Lord said Elijah, **"I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."** The reason Elijah was greatly discouraged in today's text is the fact that he was left alone. However, God is the one who leaves 7,000 people who are in accordance with the Lord's will no matter how desperate the situation is. We must not miss this. We must be able to hear what the Lord wants to show and say to us, not what we want to see and hear from the Lord. That is like a gentle whisper that Elijah heard.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Like Elijah, we must hear a gentle whisper of God in our lives. Because without a deep experience of God's presence, our spiritual life in this world cannot last. I hope we see and hear what God wants to show and say in our lives.

