

## ***“The Word of God”***

“The whole world is against me! Nothing works! I give up!” Does that sound like you? Well, this morning it’s Elijah – the Lord’s servant to proclaim His Word to all with ears to hear. But before you tune out – thinking this will be a pastor’s rant complaining about the congregation he is given to serve – there’s more for you to hear.

This text IS about Elijah, AND those whom God has called as His preachers – but the Lord also has something to say to YOU. We ALL despair because things “are not as they should be.”

Preachers complain when sinners sin – but you have your own complaints and frustrations. Your spouse thinks only about him or herself. Your children have drifted away from the church. The whole family is serving the calendar god – worshipping work, sports, activities, and everything that contributes to a frenzied busy-ness.

So, what’s the answer? I know what I do. I get in God’s ear, telling Him to whip these people into shape ..... and maybe you do to. You see, we think God is the problem – that He’s not doing His job. Did you hear Elijah? “I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts.” In other words, “I’m doing my job – but these people sure are not – maybe you could get busy and do something about that Lord.”

Isn’t that how it seems? You’re doing your job as a parent. You’re working hard at the marriage. You’re a faithful worker. But all these OTHER people are not – and that’s the problem – that’s why everything IS NOT as it should be.

What’s the answer? What does God say to Elijah? “Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord” – and behold, there’s a great wind – and we say, “alright, go get ‘em God!” But the Lord is not in the wind.

Then there is an earthquake! “That ought to shake them up.” But the Lord is not in the earthquake. And then there is fire. “Finally, they are going to get what they deserve.” But the Lord is not in the fire.

Elijah stands in the presence of the Lord – but the Lord doesn't work the way Elijah (and we) think He ought to work. Rather, there is the sound of a low whisper. And we, and the whole world thinks that's just plain foolish. How effective is that? What can a whisper do? And our frustration and complaining turns into disappointment.

Do we hear ourselves? We think the way God works is foolish. We do not trust God to do what He says – we don't trust Him to work through the humble means of His "low whisper" Word.

"But Pastor, you preach His Word all the time and people don't come to church – they don't change their lives – the world just keeps going to hell in a handbasket." And so, we are tempted to look for other ways to get the job done – and in so doing, we reject God and His way.

It is God alone who creates, redeems, and sanctifies – and all this He does through His Word – even a Word that doesn't seem like much – nothing more than a "low whisper."

Our Lutheran Confessions remind us of this very truth when it says (concerning the Preaching Office, AC V): "So that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. Through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Spirit is given (John 20:22). He works faith, when and where it pleases God (John 3:8), in those who hear the good news that God justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake ..."

So that you and I may learn to trust the Lord and His "low whisper" of a Word – He does to us what He does to Elijah. "Go," He says, "return" to the place I've put you. Pastor, go back to watching over the flock. Husband and wives, return to one another. Parents, get back to watching over your family.

The Lord directs Elijah to anoint Hazael, Jehu and Elisha – and in effect, He takes the matter out of Elijah's hands. He calls Elijah to trust Him and His Word – that He will do what He says – putting some to death, and yet, preserving His remnant of believers.

“Return,” the Lord says. “If I’ve given you to be a preacher, then preach My Word. And if I’ve given you to be a hearer, then hear My Word.” And with that Word He gives the Holy Spirit – so that we may trust Him to do what He says. Whether we see results, or not – the Lord is at work in His way, and in His time.

You can be sure that where His Word is preached the Holy Spirit is calling, gathering and enlightening His Church on earth. So, don’t fixate on how many people are in the pews or how much money is in the plates – just preach the Word, Pastor. YOU want your children to continue in the faith which leads to heaven? Then make sure they are hearing God’s Word – and trust that the Lord will do His work in and for them.

Today you stand on the mount before the Lord – and it’s not wind and earthquake and fire – but the “low whisper” of His Word. Did you hear it? “This is my Body and my blood for you. I forgive all your sins. Eat and drink, for the nourishment of your body and soul – for the strengthening of your faith in Me, and your love for one another.”

Dearly beloved, the Lord has promised that He will preserve a remnant of those who hear and trust His Word. Indeed, that is what He is doing today, right now, in our midst. Calling, gathering, enlightening you – and keeping you in the one true faith, even unto life everlasting. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.