

Pastor Roy's Sermon from August 13, 2017

Elijah has had a good run. He proclaimed the message which many heard. What it means to love and serve God. Elijah went into a bit of a backspin. Perhaps he spent too much time alone. Maybe he began to think that nobody could quite have faith as he did. So, he comes in a moment of fear, tiredness, hunger and thirst to think that there were none to carry on the faith. It would all die with him. He was alone with no hope, but to die. Despair had set in.

Then comes the answer from Yahweh, "Rest, eat and drink, and humbly get back to work choosing your successors." It will be all right. And it was.

The message to Elijah is "You are enough. You are ok. And there will be others who are enough and ok." All is well. Fear not.

Paul, likewise, has learned "The word is near you, on your lips, and in your heart." Paul's faith is: Jesus is Lord. The way of Christ is a way of safety and security. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Paul has found surety in Jesus. Finally, something, someone in whom he can trust. A place to rest from all the hard work of proving his loyalty and faithfulness—his worthiness.

Paul and Elijah had known faith as work, but have come to find that faith is rest and grace.

And Peter, this beloved story of Jesus calling Peter onto the water. But notice why Jesus chastises Peter. Does he tell Peter he didn't trust him enough? He totally trusted Jesus. To whom does he call? Jesus. No, Jesus tells his faith was strong enough to carry him through. Hmm. That's not what I've heard from this passage before. I always thought this passage was about trusting Jesus. Jesus is telling Peter to grow his faith so that he doesn't have to be saved by an outstretched arm. Jesus is teaching Peter to help himself by faith. Then Peter can help others with their faith, as Jesus has helped Peter.

Much of our training in faith has often been not to trust ourselves but to trust Jesus, to trust God. Much of the Gospels, though, call us to reach within, to grow a spirit of faith and trust, not so that an external God can swoop in and save the day, but so that we can humbly, gratefully, and joyfully be a source of life and strength to others as we work out our faith and hope in community with others doing the same. We grow in our faith, no matter our age, according to the gifts given us. Seeking and finding. Listening, connecting the dots. Exploring hope.

Remember Peter and the storm. Not as one who learned to depend on Jesus who would take care of him, but one who learned faith from Jesus. There is a difference. Remember Peter as one who learned from the best how to be faithful to his own true self, a self, wondrously created by God for good.

Our journey of faith is to do the same. Each of us is wondrously created for good. Your faith is about your gifts and how you relate to others and all of creation. The challenge is great, but you and I are quite able to make this journey. And we journey together. (We always have sisters and brothers to walk alongside.)

May we have courage in our seeking and in our helping, in our faith. Thanks be to God.