

gracepoint

A M E T H O D I S T C H U R C H

*Easter
2011*

TREEOLOGY

{Fig, Broom, Palm, Dogwood, The Cross}

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Monday 11 April 2011

Faith in the pasture and the valley

Scripture readings:

1 Kings 18 vs 26-41

1 Kings 19 vs 1-4

Psalm 23

Elijah was an incredible man of faith. We read in 1 Kings 18 about his encounter with the prophets of Baal and how God revealed Himself to be the true, living, powerful God in a miraculous display of glory and strength. It was a great victory for God and for Elijah, but yet, in the very next chapter, we read about how Elijah ran for his life... fearful, burnt out and desperate.

Sometimes we expect that once we truly dedicate our lives to God and walk in His way, our faith will be constant and unwavering. We have an unrealistic expectation that our spiritual journey will always be an easy one, but in reality, our faith is anything but simple and smooth sailing. There are times when we will lose hope, when we will stare down the barrel of trials and when we will go through the fire. There are painful moments of truth in which we have to confront ourselves and the darkness and fear in our hearts in order to go deeper or move forward with God. There are times in which we can dance with God in green pastures or see His miracles on mountaintops, but inevitably, there are also times in which we will pass through the shadows of the valley.

Wherever you find yourself today... in the pasture, or the valley... in the middle of a miracle or in a desperate wilderness... know that God is there and that He remains faithful. Elijah ran, but God found him and restored him again. He will do the same for you.

Tuesday 12 April 2011

The darkness of the heart

Scripture reading:

Leviticus 19 vs 4

1 Kings 19 vs 1-4

1 Chronicles 16 vs 25-34

Psalms 106 vs 36

Perhaps the thing that led Elijah from a place of victory to a dark place of depression and grief was the realisation that despite God's incredible acts of power and the demonstration of His holiness and strength, people were unwilling to change. Despite the fact that, on Mount Carmel, God had decisively proved that He alone was the Living God, Israel refused to turn to Him and chose instead, to continue worshipping their idols.

Idolatry might seem like a foreign concept to us, but in fact, we too worship idols. There are things in all our lives that seek to consume our attention, time and devotion. We are all tempted to put our hope and trust in things or people other than the One Who alone is worthy. May we be challenged today to honestly examine our lives and consider what we truly worship? What do you serve? In what is your hope? What are the idols in your life that have taken the place of God?

“Whatever we worship we will serve, for worship and service are always inextricably bound together. We are “covenantal” beings. We enter into covenant service with whatever most captures our imagination and heart. It ensnares us. So every human personality, community, thought-form, and culture will be based on some ultimate concern or some ultimate allegiance - either to God or to some God-substitute.” – Tim Keller

Wednesday 13 April 2011

The nourishment & care of a loving God

Scripture readings:

1 Kings 19 vs 4-8

Matthew 4 vs 4

John 4 vs 10

Hebrews 12 vs 1-2

At Elijah's moment of desperation and burnout, God did not abandon Him, but ministered to Him lovingly and gently, preparing Him for what still lay ahead. We see God's incredible act of grace and provision as He cares for Elijah, who is hiding in the wilderness under the broom tree, and gives him nourishment. He nourishes him physically with bread and water and He also begins to replenish him spiritually by simply allowing Elijah to be in His presence... to know that He has not been abandoned and will not be forsaken.

Are you allowing God to feed and sustain you?

In those moments when you feel exhausted and your journey of faith feels too difficult and too long, rest in God and trust that His grace is sufficient for you. Let us remember and heed the words of Hebrews 12 to run the race that has been set before us with patience and endurance, looking always to Jesus and knowing that He is our sustenance, strength and prize. Let Him feed you with His Word and shower you with His abundant love. Drink deeply from the streams of Living Water in Christ Jesus. Find your hope, your security and your strength in Him alone.

Thursday 14 April 2011

Human doings

Scripture readings:

1 Kings 19 vs 1-12

Psalms 46 vs 10

Elijah had been really busy doing great exploits for God. I wonder, if perhaps, all his doing – all the busyness and bustle – wasn't perhaps one of the things that led him to hide out under the broom tree and then to flee to the mountains. Perhaps he had been so busy doing things for God that He had failed to simply be with God and listen to His voice.

The moment of restoration for Elijah truly comes when God speaks to Him on the mountain... not in the fire, the earthquake or the mighty wind, but in a still, small voice. It is in that moment that Elijah receives His instruction and knows how to take the next step. It is then that He is restored and revived... when he once again becomes quiet and still enough to hear the whisper of his God.

In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren notes that we are human beings, not human doings. Our primary purpose is to glorify God by simply being in relationship with Him. That is His desire above all else: to love you and be loved by you.

Today, may you be encouraged to become still... to cease from all your striving and busyness and the chaos that surrounds you... and to lean in closer to hear the still, small voice of God. *Be* in His presence and let Him minister to your soul.

Friday 15 April 2011

Seeking the lost

Scripture readings:

1 Kings 19 vs 1-19

Luke 19 vs 10

2 Corinthians 12 vs 9

When Elijah found himself in a place of deep despair and fear, he did what is usually our nature in times like this... he ran. He ran from his work, his calling, his destiny, his God and even himself. He ran and hid, lost and afraid. But God did not leave Elijah there. He sought him out, spoke to him, nourished him and restored him.

We are never beyond God's reach. Jesus Himself said that He came to seek and save the lost and in this we find our hope. He will never give up on us and He will pursue us with His love and grace no matter where we go.

May you know today, in the depths of your being, the unconditional love that God has for you and when you face despair and pain, may you learn to run to Him instead of from Him, because His grace is sufficient for you.

"Though the means may be completely lacking to us and all may appear lost and without hope, there is never an end to the degree of God's love and care, nor to the capacity and power at God's disposal to supply any need at any time." - J. Hampton Keathley

Saturday 16 April 2011

An invitation to reflection

Scripture readings:

1 Kings 19 vs 9-19

Psalms 139 vs 23-24

When we come to this place under the broom tree where Elijah sat, looking for comfort and shelter when he felt that none could be found, we come to a place of invitation. As we journey with Elijah from this place of desolation up onto the mountain where he hides, we hear God asking the same question of us that He asked Elijah on that ancient day: "*Why are you here?*"

What has led you to this particular place in your spiritual journey? Where are you with God and how did you get here? It is an invitation to take a look at the condition of your heart and your faith and to ask yourself some probing questions about what you truly believe and whom or what you really worship. In what have you placed your hope? On what is your faith really founded?

Today, have the courage to ask God to examine your heart. Take stock of your spiritual journey... from where you have come and where you are going. As you come to a place of true honesty with yourself and God, listen for His whisper that will lead you into what He has in store for you. He wants to take you further, higher and deeper. So, will you let Him?