

Read also *Ephesians 6:11-17*. Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

In the 1970s a group called Simon and Garfunkel wrote a song called “The Sound of Silence.” Do you remember this song?

Hello darkness, my old friend, I've come to talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping, left its seeds while I was sleeping;
And the vision that was planted in my brain, still remains within the sound of silence . . .

And in the naked light I saw, Ten thousand people, maybe more
People talking without speaking, People hearing without listening
People writing songs that voices never share; And no one dare
Disturb the sound of silence . . .

Elijah had experienced great victories; but now silence from God. He had affected the weather. He prayed that God stop the rain and God did. Famine resulted. He prayed that it would rain. God sent rain. Elijah defeated the false prophets of Baal in an astonishing display of power when his altar to God was consumed by fire from heaven to prove that God was the only true God.

But now silence.

Elijah experienced God’s provision and a great and powerful victory over the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel.

Do you remember the story? The prophets of Baal numbered 450. Elijah was the only prophet of God. They built opposing altars and had a showdown. Baal was soundly defeated because he was a powerless, empty god. Before Elijah even finished praying God answered, sending down fire to consume his water-soaked altar and defeat the false god. This restored the faith of Israel, who cried in response, “The Lord indeed is God!”

Storm, famine, fire. Elijah saw God act in all of those.

It was a day of victory. Or was God’s victory that great? Overnight evil arose against him and the king’s wife threatened to kill him by sundown. He could only hear the silence of his breath—in and out, in and out—as he ran from Jezebel. Hear the story. READ 1 Kings 19:1-8a

Elijah, a man who had been so strong in faith, forgot all the successes. It was a new day and a new, unhappy game. Terror overcame him. For the first time in his life, he ran.

The farther he ran the more depressed he became. “Hello darkness my old friend. I’ve come to talk with you again.

I’ve done all this good for God, working my heart out, taking risks and now I am as good as dead.

He was experiencing the powers and principalities against whom we all battle, the mighty powers of the dark world. His plight overcame him.

Do you, like him, feel like running when problems get too great?

Running into the desert, he collapsed under the only tree. Mentally and physically exhausted, he prayed: "I'd rather die, Lord. Kill me now."

Ever been there? Why isn't this life of faith easier? What am I doing wrong? He escaped into sleep.

Slept it off. Overwhelming circumstances—sleep it off, or whatever your choice to cope. Some of us shop. Some drink. Some tune out. Some eat or quit their job or quit trying because life gets too hard.

We all want to escape like Elijah.

Well, God had mercy and fed the poor, tired, frightened man. The care he sensed when the angel came and provided food and drink in the middle of this depression was enough that Elijah was able to get up in strength.

Years ago I worked as a chaplain at Children's Medical Center Dallas. There I saw many angels at the bedside of children, angels who brought food and medicine to patients who were too exhausted fighting their diseases to open their eyes. Without those angels they would not have made it. Those were God's angels sent to show God's love to hurting people.

God has not changed one bit. Just as God knew all about Elijah's heartache and sent an angel to care for him, God loves and cares for you in your time of need.

Do you look for God's mercies?

God let Elijah eat and sleep, for God knew he would continue to run away. And that is exactly what Elijah did. He got up and ran even farther away. But this time he went toward God.

That is a good escape! It was Elijah's best move; much more productive than alternatives we often seek. You might consider it next time you don't know what to do? Let's hear what happened. READ 1 Kings 19:9b-13a.

Sitting in a cave on the mountain where Moses had seen God, God spoke to Elijah. God never leaves you, even if you are depressed and in defeat. Even if you are sick enough of your circumstances to run away.

God came to him there. God, like a gentle persistent parent who wants his child to overcome fear asked, "*What are you so afraid of?*"

Well, *Jezebel, of course!* Or, "my unfair boss, or difficult marriage, or bad relationship or bad habit I can't break, or a tragedy that comes from an enemy."

It was like the terrible attack we experienced in this country, an enemy who had been active earlier—in 1993, when Al-Qaeda terrorists bombed the basement of the World Trade Center North Tower, intending it to collapse into the South Tower and kill thousands.

The same man who backed this first attack masterminded the attacks on September 11, 2001.

These attacks were unexpected. We were the greatest country in the world, we thought. We had no idea of the hate toward us, just like Elijah had no idea of the hate which was directed toward him.

He thought he was doing well. He had been a strong believer. But now he felt ineffective, unable to convince anyone to believe in God. ‘No one left but me,’ he said.

God’s mighty power to overcome enemies had become small to Elijah’s eyes and the enemy seemed to be the only one with power.

Have you ever experienced a time when God seemed like he had no power at all? You thought God had power, but circumstances seem to make God powerless. And so God said this: READ 1 Kings 19:13b-15

Powerful and destructive forces: wind, earthquake, and fire. Elijah knew God in the victory—but God is just as present in the silence. It was not the dramatic, visible elements that gave Elijah a new understanding of God, but, the small, unexpected sound of silence.

Have you ever heard silence? You hear it by what you don’t hear. After 9-11 for three days airplanes did not fly. I worked at Love Field and the silence was deafening. No ordinary sound was the same during those three days. Nothing was the same. Everything was halted by that silence.

Then after three days, planes were released to fly again. It was around noon. All 2000 employees at Southwest Airlines left the corporate offices and we walked in silence to the fence along Love Field to pray for and watch the first plane take to the skies.

“God help us! God put us back in the air!” we pled. “God, we can’t do this without you!”

As we heard the sound of revving engines, then watched the plane taxi and turn, gaining speed, the sound of hope welled up and poured out spontaneously and we cheered.

Who would ever expect such hope to come out of the silence?

God brought his presence and power to us on a silent day, just as he did through the silence for Elijah. Following the storms and desolations, God was there, just as He was for Elijah.

Are storms defeating you? Is an enemy attacking?

Do not be overwhelmed. God is with you. Run to God. In the silence when you feel alone God says, “Child, you are not alone. No matter what you see and hear your life is in my hands and there is still work to be done.”

Let us open our lives to the shelter of a God who is present in the silence.

And the vision that was planted in my brain, still remains within the sound of silence.

AMEN