

June 22, 2025

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1 Kings 19:1-15 a

Stories of Our Faith: Listening to God Speak into Our Lives Through Scripture

We are going to try an experiment this morning – *listening to God speak into our lives through scripture* and then in small groups discussing how the scripture is speaking. Following each of the scripture readings, there will be a minute or so of silence to contemplate the scripture individually. The text of our scriptures can be found on the insert. On the back of the insert is a finger labyrinth that can be used as a contemplative practice, as desired.

Following the contemplative time, I'll ask you join with 2-3 others and reflect on the questions in your bulletin. There are two questions for each reading. You will have 5 min to share in your group. If you do not wish to participate in a group, that is fine, you can contemplate the scripture on your own. Feel free to move around, as you would like.

For those of you joining us on online, you will see the scripture and questions on the live stream slides, and if you are watching with others, I invite you discuss the questions as a group. If you are alone, I invite you to jot down some notes so you might converse with others at another time.

I want to set the stage a bit for the scripture we will hear. Our story takes place in roughly the mid 800's BCE. Kings David and Solomon are long dead and the kingdom they ruled split about 75 years prior. Our story is set in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of its seventh king – King Ahab. The Northern Kingdom had been moving away from a centralized religion worshipping the Lord God in the great Temple Solomon built for a number of years. They had drifted into constructing local altars and temples dedicated to the Canaanite deity Baal. This was intensified when Ahab's father Omri arranged a marriage between Ahab and princess Jezebel, daughter of the King of Sidon. Ahab built a temple for Baal, and his wife Jezebel brought a large entourage of priests and prophets of Baal and Asherah into the country.

In this context Elijah is introduced in 1 Kings 17 and he warns Ahab that there will be years of catastrophic drought so severe that not even dew will form, because Ahab and his queen stand at the end of a line of kings of Israel who are said to have "done evil in the sight of the Lord." There are a number of encounters between Elijah and King Ahab and his wife Jezebel that put Elijah's life in danger. It culminates with a direct test of powers between Elijah's God (the Lord God or Yahweh) and Jezebel's god Baal. In a dramatic contest, Elijah, through the work of the Lord, defeats the Canaanite God Baal and seizes the prophets and priests of Baal. It then begins to rain, signaling the end of the drought.

Well King Ahab and Queen Jezebel are none too pleased by this and threaten Elijah... Listen now as we hear this chapter of Elijah's story....

First Reading 1 Kings 19:1-8

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then 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." Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to 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. He asked that he might die, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." He got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

Questions to ponder:

How did Elijah respond to the challenges he was facing?

How did God respond to Elijah?

Second Reading 1 Kings 19:9-15

At that place he (Elijah) 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?" 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."

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, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 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?" 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." Then the Lord said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus." The Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Questions to ponder:

Where do you expect to hear from or experience God?

Are there unexpected places where you have heard or experienced God?