

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

The Revd Heather McIntyre
Friday 19th June 2020



Opening Psalm 103:1-5

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits – who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good as long as you live, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Prayer:

Holy God, whose power is known through wind, fire and still small voice, be present with us now, that as we pray our hearts may burn within us.

Living Spirit, present in creation, present in Christ, present with us now, we worship you. We greet you.

Amen

Reading: 1 Kings 19:11-13

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.

Reflection:

“The sound of sheer silence” ... a very unusual thing! During lockdown, living on my own, I have noticed that complete silence is exceedingly rare. The fridge hums, the boiler vibrates, the floorboards creak, the pipes make a noise as they expand and contract – in fact I have noticed all these noises so much more than usual that at times I have been led to think that they are all about to breakdown or cause some catastrophe in the house! I am sure they were all making the same noise previously, it is just that I was too busy, and I never sat still long enough to notice them.

Just on the very odd occasion, soon after we went into lockdown, it was also eerily quiet where I live – no cars on the road, no sounds coming from the neighbours, no planes overhead – and it was slightly disconcerting. I don’t think we always cope well with silence – we’re human and made for human interactions and we’ve grown up with noise all around us.

But silence can be helpful, and it can be nourishing. Elijah rediscovered God in the sound of sheer silence. Other translations use the words “a gentle whisper” or “a still small voice”. God knew what Elijah needed. He knew, I think, that he needed an intimate moment with him, a moment of quiet, a moment of listening. We are not told how long the silence lasted before God spoke – but it was long enough for Elijah to know that God was there with him by the cave.

Mother Theresa was once asked about her prayer life. The interviewer asked, “When you pray, what do you say to God?” Mother Teresa replied, “I don’t talk, I simply listen.” Believing he understood what she had just said, the interviewer next asked, “Ah, then what is it that God says to you when you pray?” Mother Teresa replied, “He also doesn’t talk. He also simply listens.”

I believe we sometimes need this silence to feed our hearts and minds. Silent communion with a loved one can be just as enriching as a conversation. As our lives begin to fill again with some of the more normal and everyday things that we have all craved for during these last months, maybe we can continue to create some space each day to stop, be still and listen, and allow the peace of God to guard our hearts, renew our minds and refresh our souls.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 4:4-7

Blessing:

Let us go to love and serve, knowing that we are created from love, of love and for love.

And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rest upon you and those you love, now and forever.

Amen