

## 11.5.17 Sermon - Pastor Jordan Gades – 1 Kings 19:1-18

One day this younger man came to church. The pastor had never seen him before and said a quick hello right before the service started. The man noted how he had never been in church before. The pastor was quick to note how kind, caring, loving and generous the people of this particular congregation were but then had to leave to begin the worship service.

After the worship service, the pastor again caught up with the young man and asked him what he thought of the worship service. The young man agreed that this church seemed like a great place. Everyone was friendly, people were very kind, everything was so easy to understand, and the best thing of all was the generosity of all the people. The pastor was thrilled and asked what showed off generosity the most. The man perked up and said with a huge grin. In the middle of the service, I just couldn't believe it, all the people next to me passed a plate full of money right down to me. I just could not believe it. It was the kindest most generous thing that anyone has ever done for me.

You ever feel like that's what we tend to do as a church? Not really prepare people for what being a Christian? Not just here or anything but just as the Christian church. We talk a whole lot about what we are called to be for the world. We talk about being kind. We talk about being loving. We talk about being a blessing for the whole world. We talk about spreading the message of the gospel, the good news, the truth that we are saved from our sins, from ourselves, from evil, by the grace of God through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. By the Blood of Jesus Christ we are free to live not for ourselves but for our neighbors.

That's the stuff talk about a lot in church right? Those are the things that we are used to hearing right?

But how often do we speak about our reality? Our messiah has risen from the dead saved us from the eternal ravages of Sin and now has gone ahead of us to prepare for us a real home.

Gone ahead of us and sent to us the Holy Spirit to accompany us while we are here. To do all those things that I just mentioned.

But what does that leave us as? Maybe as Elijah felt in this lesson? Elijah's only human. Right before today's reading, Elijah has just had this huge victory through a major show of God's power. And now he finds himself alone. Now he finds himself hunted and desperate, tired and alone. To the point that he just wants to die. That's the only way he sees forward. But God says no, you are not alone. I will sustain you. When you find yourself alone I will come to you and I will be enough to sustain you.

And God has not abandoned us now. God has sent the Holy Spirit to dwell with us. God is here with us now. The Holy Spirit is present every moment of your lives. We but have to start recognizing God at work. God shows up. Always expect God to show up.

And then where are we now? Are we here waiting to go to heaven? Are we here just waiting for this to be over? Sounds silly right? Of course not! No. There is no waiting involved in our lives. We have received our mission and our call. We are all part of that call. We are all a part of that great commission that Jesus gave. Jesus prepared his disciples for this call. He gave them parable after parable on how to live after he was gone.

And so that leads me to my last question? How are we prepared for this mission of discipleship and how do we prepare others? Going back to my story at the beginning, yeah it's

funny to us right. Funny to the insiders who know what's supposed to happen but it's not like that story is that far off from the truth of our world. We are living in a post Christendom world. Living in a world where the power of the religious institution of Christianity is fading. Now there is good and bad in that. But that is a truth that we need to prepare for. In today's lesson Elijah says he is the last, he is the endpoint of the true faith. There seems to him no one else who worships the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But does for him what God does for us.

On the same place as God showed up and gave the people the 10 commandments, God shows up for Elijah. But not in the way that Elijah was expecting. And not in the way we are hoping either. God isn't going to be swooping in with fire and thunder and destruction to take back what God has lost. God hasn't lost a thing. But for us who are lost and hurting, feeling alone, God sends us enough to get through today and that still small voice. It wasn't in today's lesson but the most famous and well known translation is but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of still small voice.

We aren't being prepared for this world with acts of power that shake the firmament. We are prepared for our world through small things. Through the giving of a meal, through the simple questions that open us up, through the encouragement of a small voice.

Those are the things that God is doing for Elijah. Those are the things that God is doing for us. Those are the things that we do for each other. There is God at work.

When get to have those mountain top experiences we feel amazing. We feel the presence of God so strongly, so personally, so surely. But it is in those small things that we are sustained in our mission. Because we have to come down off the mountain. We aren't sitting here waiting to die. We don't get to sit the awe inspiring almighty presence of the Lord, we hear that still small voice that says go. Go on. Go and be my messenger. Go and prepare the way. Prepare yourselves. Prepare others.

Elijah was told to go prepare Elisha as his successor. We are to do the same. Prepare others to bear witness to the amazing word of God. Prepare them to live a life of faith.

We Christians do a lot of weird things if you stop and think about it. And we often don't talk about them a lot. I mean the offering is just one of those. Think about prayer. If there was a person who knew nothing about what you were doing it would look pretty weird. Or our worship services. Our traditions that have come about over thousands and thousands of years and we hardly ever talk about why we do them. Stand up sit down. Sing, shake hands, eat some food, sing, leave. I mean, what?

We have hopefully been prepared for why we do these things but I cannot express enough that we can always do better. Even for the not funny stuff like standing up against bullies or just being support for those who are hurting. We can prepare for those as well. The Holy Spirit is here guiding us so that we can be here truly for one another. God is here. God is preparing us for our work in the world.

For my last minute I'd like to try and teach you one of these complicated words that you might have heard but you might not have known what it means. Ok?

So the word is Theophany. Ever heard that before? Well I have a great way for you to remember it. So Theo means God, like theology. And then we have Phany, which of course means butt. And interesting story, when God reveals himself to Moses of Mount Sinai, God shows Moses his backside, otherwise known as his...

So now you know, a theophany is when God shows up and sticks his butt into your business.

Well not quite, theophany really means god becoming visible, becoming known, so showing Gods self to Moses or that still small voice to Elijah.

But the important thing is that God is still showing up. God is still making Godself known.

When we recognize that God has shown up that is when we start to receive and live out the gospel. That is when we start being prepared for what is to come. That is when we can start preparing others to hear the truth of this amazing Good News that we carry in our hearts. But if we don't talk about where God shows up then it becomes really hard to start talking about everything else.

So remember, God is showing up and God is preparing us for this journey. Go and share the good news. Amen