

MEN'S LIFE BLOOMINGTON & GOD @ WORK

Tuesday, September 10, 2019

The Work of Waiting – 1 Kings 17-19

Overview: I love autumn with the cooler temperatures, the colors, and the celebrations of harvest! A time of spiritual autumn though is not always as celebratory, especially if what I planted was not "good." This week we will look at lessons from Elijah as we explore the ideas of the spiritual work we need to do while living day to day in a period of spiritual autumn.

Hearing Our Stories: Aaron Brown

Segment Questions:

- What do you think Elijah did with his time while sitting by the brook and waiting for food from the ravens? What would you have done?
- Why did Elijah ask the people how long they would limp between two options? If the Lord is God, follow him. Baal got in Israel's way of following God. What gets in our way?
- What is the significance of Mount Sinai being the place where Elijah encountered God? God is sometimes in the fire and earthquakes. Why is it hard to find God in the quiet whisper?
- Have you ever been in a Spiritual Autumn? Describe how you felt. Did you feel like Elijah just waiting for 3 years? Or maybe, "Lord, take me now"?
- Did you encounter God there? Do you think it is possible to get yourself out of a spiritual autumn?
- Share a time where God has been quiet, but looking back, you are certain God was active.

Action Questions:

- The autumn is a time to harvest. How long will we "limp between two options" – the Spirit and the flesh? What are some ways you ensure that you are sowing in the Spirit? What are some ways to avoid sowing in the flesh?
- The autumn is a time to feast. What are some ideas to feed your soul during this season? What two ideas from your table are you willing to commit to over the next 3 months?
- The autumn is a time to be thankful. What are some ways you can demonstrate your thankfulness this week. What two ideas from your table are you willing to commit to doing this week?

Personal Prayer: Father God, We thank you for your Word. We thank you that we find ourselves in stories and we thank you for those you have placed in our lives to sharpen us and to walk along with. We are thankful for seasons in our lives and that you are always there, even in the quiet waiting. Give us the faith to bolster each other and to participate in the work while we wait for the next season in our lives. Guide us in what we are sowing in the Spring to be fruitful for your glory in the Autumn. Lastly, Father, give us grateful hearts. We love you and praise you, Lord! Amen

Introduction

For everything there is a season. What season are you in your spiritual walk? That can be a hard question to answer. Sometimes, as it was for me, it is a harder question to ask. What do you think of when you hear the word 'Autumn'? What about 'Spiritual Autumn'?

For me, my thoughts have been drifting back to Elijah with increased frequency lately. His story is recorded in 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2. One of my favorite sections of Elijah's story is after he prophesied to evil King Ahab that there would be no more rain for years, God guided him by a brook. God's plan was that Elijah would lay low by the brook and ravens would bring him food to sustain him. Eventually the brook dried up, and he moved in with a widow and her son. The widow's flour and oil never dried up and she continued to feed Elijah and her son. 1 Kings 18 states that in the third year of the drought, Elijah again confronts King Ahab after hiding all of this time.

Elijah scheduled a showdown between himself and the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel. As he came near the people, Elijah said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." We know the story. The prophets of Baal and Elijah each get a sacrificial bull. Baal's prophets cry out to Baal and cut themselves to get their god's attention, but they get no response. Elijah douses his bill with water and prays to God. God sends fire from heaven down to consume the sacrifice. Victorious Elijah slaughters the prophets of Baal and the people responded by saying, "The Lord, he is God."

Elijah flees from an enraged Ahab and Jezebel. God leads him into hiding once again, but this time in a cave on Mount Horeb. Elijah's complaint is that "It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life for I am no better than my fathers." He goes on to talk about Israel has turned away from God and he is "the only one left." In 1 Kings 19:11-13, God said,

"Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks 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, the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

The amazing thing about this passage is that Mount Horeb is also known by another name – Mount Sinai. The same place described in Exodus 19:18-20 as **"Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in the fire. The smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly. And as the sound of the trumpet grew louder, Moses spoke and God answered him in thunder. The Lord came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up."**

At different times in that same place, God was in the fire. He was in the earthquake. He was in the storm. He was also in the silence. Elijah knew where he was. He knew the significance. Divine silence does not equal divine inactivity. No matter what spiritual season we are in, but especially in a bleak Winter season or in a windy and chilly Fall, we must remember that God is there and he is still sovereignly working within us.