

Week 2 “Discernment: Listening to God?”

“...But there was and is, only One who can tell us this: the Lord himself. And he wants to tell us...when we are content to REST in hm, to put ourselves into his keeping and into his hands...he will tell us slowly and sweetly, when we are willing to spend time with him; time with him who is beyond all time.” Emilie Griffin (from her book *Clinging: The Experience of Prayer*)

Scriptures:

- Psalm 62
- Isaiah 30:15-18
- Matthew 11:29-30
- Luke 10:38-42
- John 14:16-20

Sermon Text Questions 1 Kings 19:1-19

- In the echo of God’s voice, “what are you doing here, Elijah,” how is it that we find ourselves in the places that we are?
- How might we identify, or not, with the place and station in life that Elijah finds himself?
- What is it that we need to sustain us for the journey and even into the wilderness?
- In what ways are we receiving and/or refusing what God wants to say to us and provide for us?
- How do we cultivate space for solitude and silence? Where and for what reasons do we find ourselves resistant to solitude and silence?
- How does the current cultural climate impact our acknowledgement and practice of solitude/silence?
- In what ways do rest, nourishment, and solitude/silence contribute to the process of discernment?

Reflection Questions:

- In what ways are you experiencing physical exhaustion or depletion?
- When you are tired or fatigued, how do you find yourself experiencing God and yourself in those moments?
- What is your experience of solitude and silence these days?
- In what ways are you receiving the invitation to solitude/silence and the provision of God’s rest and sustenance?
- How is God’s still small voice showing up or being heard in your life? What are you hearing?
- In what ways are you experiencing God’s transforming presence in the silence of solitude?

PRACTICE: Beginner’s Silent Solitude *(adapted from Invitation to Solitude and Silence by Ruth Haley Barton)*

- Identify a sacred space and time.
- Begin with ten, fifteen or twenty minutes of time
- Settle into comfortable yet alert physical position. Take three deep breaths – inhale deeply and exhale slowly.
- What do you need to entrust to God’s care? Name them, jot them down, present them to God. Trust His care.
- Use a simple prayer that expresses your openness and desire for God. (“Here I am” “Come, Lord Jesus” “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me” “Help”) Pray this prayer several times as an entry into silence and as a way of dealing with distractions. When distractions come, simply acknowledge them. and let them float by. Return to a posture of silence by praying your simple prayer.
- As you become quiet, allow that which is unknown and unnamed within you to surface. NOTICE the dynamics that are drawing you into solitude and silence. What is happening inside you and in your relationship with God right now that seems to be inviting you in? Is there a word or phrase that expresses what is going on in your interior world?
- Allow these inner experiences and dynamics to come to the surface, feel them, name them, sit with them, express them to God if you wish. In this time, let it be enough to create space for yourself and those things that are stirring in the interior places of your soul. Listen to them, not as experiences to be avoided but as invitations to open your soul to God in new ways.

- Attend to what you are noticing and hearing. What might God be saying? Choose a word or phrase that helps you remember. Write it down after you end your time of silence.
- Close your time in silence with a prayer of gratitude for God's presence with you in this time of noticing and listening.
- Resist the urge to judge yourself or your silent experience. The purpose of time spent in silence is just to be with God in whatever state you are in and let Him be in control. Trust that whatever your time in silence was like, it was exactly as it should be.