

June 12, 2016  
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

## **Sermon - "Where is God?"**

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Elisha and Paul are two of Christianity's greatest heroes.

We envision them as holy men, committed to their cause, spreading love and compassion everywhere they go.

Not so in today's readings.

Today we meet Paul and Elisha at their low points.

We see a side of each of them that wallows for a time in self-pity before they get a message from God to pull themselves together and get going.

Have you ever felt like Elisha, hiding under a broom tree, begging for death, unable to carry on with your appointed tasks?

More importantly, can you relate to the feeling that you alone know how things ought to be and wouldn't it be great if everyone else saw things your way?

Both Paul and Elijah struggle with many things, but nothing more than himself.

We can all probably recognize how we can be our own worst enemy.

This morning's story clearly demonstrates Elijah's demons bringing him to a standstill.

Oftentimes, it is easy for us to see the source of other people's problems, while remaining blind to our own circumstances.

We have the benefit of knowing how Elijah's story will turn out.

We have seen many triumphs of Elijah before this event, and we know that there will be many triumphs to follow.

Sometimes we forget that people on the top weren't always there.

Sometimes we are less compassionate toward those who seem to be favored.

We forget that lives can be changed in a split second, with one wrong decision or unfortunate turn of events.

Elijah is coming off of a great victory, celebrating the defeat of his enemies.

But one enemy remains – Queen Jezebel vows that Elijah will be dead before the sun sets – so he is off and running.

He is alone.

He is scared.

He feels hopeless.

It can be hard to understand how things went so wrong so quickly for Elijah.

Yet that is part of Elijah's story just like it can often be part of our story.

Sometimes we forget that everyone, regardless of their status, has moments of vulnerability.

Each of you sitting here this morning have had Elijah moments.

Each time we gather someone is feeling vulnerable.

Someone here today needs to feel God's care; God's love; God's tenderness.

God sends unexpected help to Elijah during his time of great vulnerability.

Elijah is able to overcome his great sadness through the care of the angels and the nourishment of their food.

This story invites us to see how God has been present to us in difficult moments.

It also invites us to view our problems through a lens able to see God's divine presence in the world.

Just as God is clearly present to Elijah in order to help him overcome his travails, we must have the same confidence that God is present and will be present in our lives.

We know the whole of the Elijah story and can see this as just a blip in the story.

We must also have the awareness that our travails and troubles are far from the whole of our story.

Just as God has been present in our past, we must persevere in the hope that God will be present in our future.

We must also understand that God may choose to reach that person feeling vulnerable through us.

Perhaps we are the one, this day, to make a difference, to be the voice of an angel for the person hurting this morning.

We have that power.

We must also be aware that we put ourselves at a different kind of risk when we feel invulnerable.

Nothing is more dangerous than a person who believes they need no help from God or anyone else.

One of the ways that God helps us to dig ourselves out of a hole is by reaching out to other people.

Martin Luther King claimed “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”

If God came into our midst this morning and asked “What are you doing here?” what would you say?

I came upon an article this week that addressed the problem of getting yourself back on track when you feel lost.

The author suggested a few concrete steps to get yourself out from under that broom tree:

Take an inventory of your life.

Make a list of everything that doesn't make you feel good, uplift you, support you, or inspire you.

And then say ‘No’ to those things.

She argued that “we remain where we are simply because we listen to the louder voice of our fear rather than the softer whisper of our heart.”

Fear of change. Fear of trying something new. Fear of the unknown; Fear of letting go of our beliefs.

We don't realize that saying no requires that we muster up the courage to make changes in our life.

It takes the willingness to step into the unknown and allow the ground underneath us to shake for a bit.

It requires becoming comfortable in the discomfort.

We don't realize that on the other side of that discomfort are miracles waiting for you.

Some of these miracles include

discovering your inner strength

discovering your own personal truth – what inspires you

discovering your gifts

remembering what brings you joy

allowing your destiny to unfold rather than handing your power over to fate

You have choices.

You get to choose between your head and your heart.

This is where we hold the power.

Our true divine power.

When Elijah holed himself up in that cave, hiding from his own life, God was persistent.

With the great wind, earthquake, thunder and fire God demonstrated to Elijah that life keeps going whether you are participating or not.

In the sheer silence that followed Elijah realized God's presence and heard God's direction to carry on.

We too, can hear God's call when we stop to listen.

When we put our fears aside, we are able to open our hearts to angels and spirits gently guiding us in the direction that God wants us to go.

For the next eight weeks I will be on sabbatical, a time dedicated primarily to studies, but also to rejuvenation and reconnection with God.

I am hopeful that you, too, will spend the next two months hearing the word of God.

Our guest preachers will provide you with an opportunity to hear another voice interpreting scripture.

I also hope that you will spend time this summer listening for the sheer silence of God's presence in your life.

I leave you with this prayer to the Holy Spirit by St. Augustine:

Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.

Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.

Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy.

Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy.

Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.

Amen.