

*A Sermon Preached by Fr Derek Frost
on 7 August, 2011*

1 Kings 19: 9-18

[If you did not hear this lesson it is recommended that you read it first - this sermon will make sense of it]

In today's Old Testament Reading from the First Book of Kings we hear about a great man of God – the prophet Elijah.

Elijah lived at a time when God's chosen people had fallen into apostasy and sin. For the most part they had stopped worshipping the one true God and abandoned his laws and commandments. Many had forsaken the true God and worshipped Baal, an evil idol; he was made in the image of a great bull. His followers were encouraged to promote sexual immorality and to seek self-gratification and power, no matter what the cost. Elijah roundly condemned the worshippers of Baal, including King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. The king and queen loathed Elijah with a passion. They wanted Elijah dead and the worship of the true God wiped out.

In a great contest between Elijah - God's prophet - and the prophet of Baal, God blessed Elijah and made him victorious. Queen Jezebel was incensed against Elijah and swore she would have him killed.

Elijah was worn out by his ministry and work for God. He flees to Horeb on Mount Sinai, the Holy Mountain of God, where Moses had received the Ten Commandments of God. Elijah finds slight comfort in being in this holy place but soon he is afflicted by depression, fatigue and weariness - to stand up for your beliefs and to be faithful to God can be hard and physically, mentally and spiritually draining. You can often feel so lonely. Perhaps Elijah felt that by going to God's Holy Mountain he might come closer to God. Depression can be so very hard.

God does indeed come to Elijah and speaks to his faithful prophet. He asks him, "Elijah, what are you doing here?"

Elijah says,

"I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

As you can tell Elijah is very low in spirit and morale.

God leads Elijah out of the cave on the Holy Mountain, where he has been hiding. He shows Elijah a fantastic display of natural phenomena, telling Elijah that God will pass by.

First there was a great hurricane wind, awesome in power. But God did not show himself in the hurricane.

After the hurricane, an awesome earthquake. But God did not show himself in the earthquake.

After the earthquake, an awesome fire. But God did not show himself in the fire.

Then utter silence, a peace which passes understanding and the *still small voice* of God – God was there.

In the stillness and peace Elijah is given new strength, a new vitality, a renewed purpose in life.. He is brought out of his depression, empowered by God to do his will, to live his life, and given grace to make God – the one true God – alive and real to others.

God reveals to Elijah that there are at least 7,000 other faithful souls in Israel who have not bowed down and kissed Baal in idolatrous worship. God has preserved a faithful remnant, who honour and worship Him – he is not alone.

God tells Elijah to leave this Holy Place, get back into the fray and witness to and worship Him. He tell him to:

- Anoint Hazael to be King over Aram
- Anoint Jehu to be King over Israel
- Anoint Elisha to be a prophet like himself.

God would uses these secular and religious leaders to wipe out the evil of Baal worship and help restore the people to Himself.

Elijah can now rejoice that he not alone in the service of God. There are 7,000 righteous people, two Kings and a prophet in the making, who will help bring the people back to God.

So what do we learn from Elijah's story? We learn the painful truth that it is not always easy or comfortable to stand up and be counted for God. We may well face hard and difficult opposition. It can be so depressing. So like Elijah we must come away and allow God to show himself to us. So often we don't see God in great and mighty acts – although sometimes we might. More often he comes to us in a *still small voice*.

So in the rush and business, in the noises and bustle of life, find time for prayer, worship communion and study and the *still small voice* of God will come to you. He will say to us, "What are you doing here?. If we let him, he will lead us to where he wants us to be.

Although as faithful, active believers we are few in number, God preserves a faithful remnant to honour and serve Him. We must act as a good leaven of humanity. We must act as a light on a lamp stand to give light to the world. Let us remember we can never tie God down and limit his power.

He can and does use the sacred and the secular to achieve his holy will and give hope to his people.

We need to listen for the *still small voice* of God amidst the toil and tribulation of the world.

God is faithful and knowing that is so we, like Elijah, must be faithful too.

**Allow the Lord to use you and work through you and then you can be
a *still small voice* that honours and worships God and brings hope and healing to others.**