

Department Chapel 10/02/18

1 Kings 19:9-13

So He said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking 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. After the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

This scene immediately follows the well-known account of Elijah's heroism on Mount Carmel. Elijah's actions against the prophets of Baal provoke Jezebel into a vow against Elijah's life. Elijah flees, crashes under a juniper tree, and hopes for death. He's prodded on by an angel of God, finding his way to Horeb, where he has a bit of a humorous exchange with God: God asks, simply, what Elijah is doing there. Elijah instead vomits his reasons for despair. God counters with a call for Elijah to stand before Him, and Elijah experiences a series of events:

- A great, strong wind
- An earthquake
- A fire
- And, finally, a "gentle blowing"

Elijah knows his God and responds immediately to the "still, small voice." God repeats His original question.

These days, a recent Southeast Texan hears "great, strong wind" and immediately thinks of Hurricane Harvey, considered by some the worst rainfall in human history. More impressive than the storm, though, was the immediate and selfless response of the communities in, around, and even far from the region. People otherwise unaffected by the storm, dropped everything, drove as far south as they could, and put in boats on flooded freeways to search for someone to help. People with inundated houses of their own left their wreckage behind to search for someone else who might be in greater need. You won't believe it, but during these few days social media was actually **uplifting**! Truly miraculous! Well on our way to "Saint Harvey." But here's the thing about flood waters: they recede. Enthusiasm or heroism buoyed by the tide, follows to the same level. The question is, can the selflessness and passionate love for neighbor continue when the urgency of the catastrophe has passed?

At the risk of over-optimism, I no longer worry about our capacity for heroism in the face of national or global emergency. I've seen the people of God with the courage of Elijah carry His banner through the gale of impossibilities. My struggle, my challenge, is to follow Elijah to the mouth of the cave at the sound of God's "gentle blowing," when the gale has ended. When the cameras are off. When no one is live tweeting. Can I recognize the myriad opportunities to follow Him in the "mundane"? I have to remind myself not to manufacture the "epic moment." Those come naturally, without my assistance, thank you very much! I owe my neighbor God's dignity, now, when it's "boring." I owe my superiors respect, today, whether there are "looming difficulties" or not. I humbly need to remember that a moment of "stillness" for me may not be a moment of stillness for others. I cannot—and should not—always know what you are going through in the moment. But I do know—or should know—how God has called me to live at all moments. And if I truly love Him, to be His child in any moment should be "epic" enough.