June 19, 2022 + 10:30 A.M. Second Sunday after Pentecost

We Join in Worship

PRELUDE In Christ There Is No East or West

Dale Wood

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Christ's peace is with us always, no matter where we may be. And so, Christ's peace is with each and every one of us in this moment. Let us take it in. Let us really feel it. If able, please stand where you are, look around, and make signs of Christ's peace to each other. If you are at home, give somebody a call after the service to share Christ's peace!

* CALL TO WORSHIP (Adapted from Psalm 42)

Leader: As a deer longs for flowing streams, so our souls long for you, O God. Our souls thirst for

God, for the living God. When shall we come and behold the face of God?

ALL: These things we remember, as we pour out our souls: how we went with the

throng and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs

of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

Leader: Why are you cast down, O our souls, and why are you disquieted within us? Hope in

God, for we shall again praise God, our help and our God.

ALL: Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your torrents; all your waves and your billows

have gone over us. By day the LORD commands steadfast love, and at night the

LORD's song is with us, a prayer to the God of our lives.

Leader: Why are you cast down, O our souls, and why are you disquieted within us?

ALL: Let us hope in God, for we shall again praise God, our help and our God.

*OPENING HYMN: "When Morning Gilds the Skies" (487)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION:

Leader: In his letter to the church in Galatia, Paul writes, "Now that faith has come, we are no

longer subject to a disciplinarian." Let us confess to God with the assurance that we will

be met with grace rather than punishment.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

O God, we join our hearts and voices in repentance. Help us to repair what we have broken with our transgressions and so to reconcile with each other and with you. We confess that we have been consumed by violence and chaos in our world, in our communities, and within ourselves. Rather than work for peace, we accept things the way they are. We stay silent as the violence grows louder. We allow the storms that are raging outside to enter into our souls. We allow chaos outside and within. Forgive us for standing back as your Creation groans. Forgive us for letting ourselves be shaken. Calm us and speak to us with your still, small voice. Remind us of our call to seek peace and make peace. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

KYRIE

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader:

Friends, hear the good news! In Christ Jesus we are all children of God through faith.

ALL:

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

GLORIA PATRI (Gentle Singing)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

STATEMENT OF FAITH: (adapted from *The Confession of 1967*)

God the Holy Spirit fulfills the work of reconciliation in humanity. The Holy Spirit creates and renews the church as the community in which people are reconciled to God and to one another. The Holy Spirit enables us to receive forgiveness as we forgive one another and to enjoy the peace of God as we make peace among ourselves. In spite of our sin, the Holy Spirit gives us power to become representatives of Jesus Christ and his gospel of reconciliation to all humanity.

We Hear God's Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: (Unison)

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Holy Spirit, that in your light we may see light, in your truth find freedom, and in your will discover peace. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

HEBREW BIBLE LESSON:

1 Kings 19:1-13

EPISTLE LESSON:

Galatians 3:23-29

GOSPEL LESSON:

Luke 9:1-9

SERMON:

The Breath of YHWH

MUSICAL MEDITATION

Verset on "Balm in Gilead"

Jon Spong

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION:

Leader:

The chaos that surrounds us and fills us may feel like it is too much to handle. With God's peace and the support we give each other in community, though, we can keep going with joy in our hearts. So, let us give joyfully with the hope that all shall be well. If you are here in person today and have not yet done so, please place your offering in the plate as you leave. If you are here virtually today, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option. Now let us take a moment to reflect on stewardship as we hear the offertory.

OFFERTORY

As the Deer

M. Nystrom

*DOXOLOGY

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Praise God, above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)

O God, we dedicate these gifts to you, trusting that you will give us Wisdom in using them for the purpose you breathe into our lives. Continue to give us the assurance that the work we do is not in vain but is for your glory. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN:

"It Is Well with My Soul" (Glory to God 840)

We Go Into the World

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty

Edward Broughton

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Life of the Church

PEEK AT THE WEEK:

SUNDAY 6/19:

FATHER'S DAY

Worship in Person & Online – 10:30 AM (Outdoor Worship – Weather Permitting)

Salad Fundraiser

SATURDAY 6/25:

Sackurday - 12:00 PM

Announcements

- <u>SALAD SALE TODAY AFTER WORSHIP</u> Join us for this summer spin on our soup sales to help raise funds for the general fund! It will be delicious!
- YOUTH CONNECTIONS will meet after worship Sunday, June 26. Join us for youth worship planning!
- WORSHIP IN THE GARDEN We are excited to continue with some worship opportunities in the garden this summer! Weather permitting, we will be worshiping outside on the third Sundays of the summer months. Get ready to bring your lawn chairs next on July 17!
- MINISTRY OF MISSION FLOWER VOUCHER FUNDRAISER The Ministry of Mission is having its annual flower voucher fundraiser. Flower vouchers will be available for purchase starting Sunday, April 24th for Zandstras Greenhouse, and they are \$17.00/each. The voucher is worth \$17.00 and can be spent just like cash at the greenhouse. The Ministry of Mission receives \$3.00 from every voucher sold. This is one of the Ministry of Mission's most important fundraisers, and we greatly appreciate your support. If you are interested in purchasing vouchers, please contact Tracy Oprea @ (219) 616-7181. Tracy can still make no contact deliveries if requested. The Ministry of Mission thanks you for your continued support!
- **READ THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR:** We want to encourage everyone to make the Bible a regular part of your daily life no matter how much reading you do. The reading plan can be found in the Larger View each month and on our church's website (www.fpchighland.org). If you'd like the reading plan emailed to you, contact Heather Casiano at hcasiano@fpchighland.org. May this year in the Bible be a blessing to you!

Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:

- <u>BLESSING BOX</u> Our Blessing Box has gained even more importance in this pandemic. Economic impacts are dire, and the most vulnerable in our midst are the most harmed. Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates on food items before donating them.
- GOT SNEAKERS FUNDRAISER We are collecting pairs of gently worn, used and new sneakers to help earn money for our projects and programs here at FPCH and help the environment at the same time! Blue bins for the shoes will be located in the sanctuary narthex, inside door D by the office, and outside the church building by door D. *Please note that we can only use sneakers/tennis shoes!*

Prayer List

Anthony
George Nelson
Brady Vanes
Sonny Buono
Danielle
George Griner
Guy Hendricks

Bill and Anettia Holmes

Daniel Litwicki David Markley

Pat and David Kingen

Carmelo

Diana and Ray Mendoza Loved ones of Jamie Orem

Janet Orem John Mullen Jeanne Nestor

Cindy Waltz and Sister

Andrew Bobalik Gale Snyder Yvonne Suroviak

U. Chong Karen Wendy

Georgette Sknerski Donna Helmer Jakob Holden Denise Matthys

Jerry

Steve & Melinda Gary Studer

Jan Oprea
The Blackburn Family

Amy

Laura Buono Domsic The Windstrups Ruth Dekker Rick Parker Barbara Morton Caroline Studer Robert Lestina Laura Wisner

Cary and Jennifer Pearson

Carol Finley Huilin Holly Letnich

Holly Letnich Lily Renfro

Marla and Jerry Renfro

Jaden Mendez Rev. Paula Cooper

Jack Sum Frank Falzone

Paris

Sandy Buono Tammy Lynn

Myrna Grove

Doug and Sue Matthews

Kiki Ho

Janet Terpstra and Family

Robert Urich

Camri and Chris McAvoy

Jane Vance Richard Simmons

Jackie

Sophia Brasch Michelle Robin Schlagel

Robin Schlagel Khloe Agbor

Jackie

1 Kings 19:1-13

19 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³ Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die, "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you." ⁸ He got up and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ At that place he came to a cave and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

¹¹ He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces 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, ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Galatians 3:23-29

²³ Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be reckoned as righteous by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

Luke 9:1-9

9 Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³ He said to them, "Take nothing for your journey: no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. ⁴ Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. ⁵ Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶ So they departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

⁷ Now Herod the ruler heard about all that had taken place, and he was perplexed because it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸ by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the ancient prophets had arisen. ⁹ Herod said, "John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he tried to see him.

The Breath of YHWH

1 Kings 19:1-13; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 9:1-9

Throughout the summer we are going to be taking a deep dive into ocean of Wisdom proclaimed by the prophets of the Hebrew Bible. We often call them major prophets and minor prophets, but even the minor prophets have played a major role in our faith tradition! Their actions and words were central to the lives of kings and vagabonds alike in the world that was and the world that was to come. The Hebrew prophets were called by God to the very particular vocation of speaking truth to power, calling out injustice and unrighteousness, and turning the hearts of the people back to God. Oftentimes they served as direct mouthpieces of God, saying whatever God spoke through them. Sometimes they mysteriously and miraculously manifested messianic visions, supernaturally seeming to call into being the one who would come to save the people. All times they were very human with their very human feelings and very human failings.

Today we turn to an old friend, revisiting a story that we actually last heard in this very garden. The world has turned since then, and so have our perspectives in so many ways. And so we will get a fresh take on one of the greatest stories ever told. The most famous prophet of all was Elijah. His words, however, were not spoken into oral or written tradition as a cohesive text like so many of the other prophets. Instead, his story is part of the historical book of *I Kings*. In chapter 17 he predicted a drought that came to be. He multiplied the widow's meal and oil. He resurrected the widow's son from death. In chapter 18 he had authority over the other prophets, including Obadiah. He had the great contest with the priests of Baal and Asherah. He burned the cow, rebuilt the 12-stone altar, and called the rains down from the heavens. So, he turned meager amounts of food into an abundance. He raised a friend from the dead. Kings trembled in fear of him. He rebuilt the place of worship. He had power over the very weather. Later he would ascend into heaven. Hmmmm, those particular miracles and actions sound very familiar, don't they?

But there were some not-so-wonderful parts of the story of this very human human with very human feelings and very human failings. He slaughtered hundreds of priests and priestesses of Baal. And so he got on the wrong side of Jezebel. Jezebel has been vilified throughout history, the archetype of the evil feminine, bent on destroying all that is good and righteous. Let's not kid ourselves, though. Jezebel has this notoriety simply because she was a woman with power. If we look at the records of Israelite kings, every single one was just as vicious if not more so. She was clearly more effective at ruling than her husband, Ahab. She was a Phoenecian who married into the Israelite world. She remained true to her culture and true to her religion. Then the person she despised most came into her realm and slaughtered all of the priests and priestesses of her faith. She quite understandably wanted vengeance.

Elijah knew this time that he was in trouble.

He was terrified. He got up and ran for his life. He arrived at Beer-sheba in Judah and left his assistant there. He himself went farther on into the desert a day's journey. He finally sat down under a solitary broom bush. He longed for his own death: "It's more than enough, LORD! Take my life because I'm no better than my ancestors." He lay down and slept under the solitary broom bush.

This is really quite a desperate scene! Elijah has just run for his life from one of the most powerful leaders in Israelite history. He knows that he is danger, and he also seems to have an idea that slaughtering the priests and priestesses was not right. He has left behind his one companion and wandered into the desert. The one place that can offer him solace is in the shade of a short, deciduous shrub with a cascade of thorny branches and yellow flowers. There he asks YHWH to take his life, to end the difficulty of his prophetic work. Then an angel appears with bread and water, like the manna from heaven, and tells Elijah to get up, eat and drink. The symmetry of Elijah's story is beautiful. Way back at the beginning of his journey he was saved from hunger by a poor, famished widow who gave him bread when she had barely enough to feed her son, let alone herself.

Now, another chosen messenger of God brings him sustenance. In this Elijah finds the strength to travel the 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Horeb.

Thus we come upon one of the most profound, mystical experiences in all of Scripture. The WORD of YHWH comes to Elijah in a cave on Mount Horeb, asking, "Why are you here?" Elijah explains that in his zealousness for serving God he had made enemies who would kill him. "They have torn down your altars, and they have murdered your prophets with the sword. I'm the only one left, and now they want to take my life too!" In other words, they had done EXACTLY what Elijah had done to Jezebel's people.

YHWH is not satisfied with this response. Elijah is commanded to go outside and stand on the surface of the mountain, for his God is going to pass by. Before our dear prophet can get out of the cave, though, a mighty wind consumes the entire mountain, followed by an earthquake, and then a great fire. The raw power of the one who created the universes is on display! And then there is sheer silence. *Hello, darkness, my old friend! I've come to talk with you again.* Elijah wraps his face in his mantle because he knows he is about to enter into the presence of the Holy. He steps out onto the side of this now desolate mountain. Trees must have fallen everywhere. Rubble must have been still rolling down. Flames must have been burning. And into this apocalyptic scene spoke a still, small voice.

Many believe that God's sacred name, YHWH, comes from the Hebrew verb to be. I AM. Without question the name is tied to the very essence of existence. Others, however, take the syllables YHWH back even further, tying them to the basic sounds of life. YHWH. Breathing. The breath of God moved over the waters at creation. God breathed life into the first humans. The breath of God had just caused the very mountain upon which Elijah stood to tremble. And now in a still, small voice YHWH breathes this question into the apocalyptic landscape that must have mirrored Elijah's own tortured soul. In a still, small voice, YHWH breathes this question directly into the great prophet, his lungs, his spirit, his very being. "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

The answer? Elijah was afraid. He was not scared in the superficial sense. Clearly he was quite brave. He had performed miraculous, destabilizing deeds in the face of his greatest nemesis. He had just walked out of his cave in the aftermath of the fury of a tornado, earthquake, and fire without even seeming to bat an eyelid. His flight from Jezebel had been justified and prudent. Sure he was scared for his life, but who wouldn't be? That was natural, self preservation fear. But then he had sat down under that solitary broom tree. There under the broom tree he had had time to think. And that's when the real fear settled upon his shoulders like the mantle he wore so faithfully. Bone-deep, spirit-wearying existential fear took over. He thought he had been called and gifted. He thought he had been chosen for a purpose. He thought what he was doing was good and right and just. But then he had had to run for his life. They would not listen to him. They would not change their ways because of him. Instead, they would kill him. Yes, under that broom tree he came face to face with the fear that all he had done had been for nothing.

UFFFFFF I know that very particular existential depression all too well! YHWH's messenger got him to get up and make his way to Mount Horeb, but Elijah immediately went into hiding in a physical cave that reflected the metaphysical cave of his fear and isolation. If YHWH would not grant him death, then at the very least he would hide away from the rest of the world, hide away from his failure.

But then there was silence. And then there was a whisper of a voice. The breath of God reentered his bones, and Elijah had to feel YHWH in the very essence of his being. He comes to understand that his very being is tied to the very being of YHWH. For the first time he truly comprehends that his life matters, that it has deep purpose regardless of his success or failure, because he was fearfully and wonderfully made by the Creator of the universes, by the one who breathed life into him. And somehow, this has to have been even more **terrifying** than all that Ahab and Jezebel could throw at him, than all that existential dread of meaninglessness. For, to actually be filled with the breath of YHWH meant radical transformation. It meant that there could be no more wallowing in self doubt and pity. It meant that there could be no more hiding from the real meaning of things, the real truth of life.

That, my friends, is something I understand very well! I have always FEARED what it would actually mean to get to know the breath of YHWH in my bones, to fully come to terms with the fact that God has breathed into me, just as God has breathed into every person in the history of creation. I have been AFRAID of the prospect of how radically life would change if I actually listened to this breathing and followed that still, small voice instead of living all my life as a reaction to the chaos of the whirlwind, earthquake, and fire. To live life actively, as action according to God's desire, rather than to live life passively, as reaction to all that is going on in the world. Now, given all that is going on in the world, I know that it may sound absurd for one's deepest fear to be that of God-breathed transformation into true purpose and meaning. But I would venture to guess that others have felt that fear as well, perhaps even some of you.

Over the past several years, though, it has become abundantly clear to me that my fear is unjustified and UNJUST. For, there are those in this world, in this society, in our midst, who actually have to FEAR for their lives. Pregnant women and trans children have to fear going to the hospital. All children have to fear going to school. People of color have to live in constant fear of being gunned down, even at their homes, in their cars, and in their houses of worship. They have to fear being lynched in institutions of incarceration, serving time for crimes that no longer exist. They have to fear the disparate impacts of pandemics, poverty, pollution, and hunger ending their lives much earlier than mine. Across the globe people have to live in fear of their livelihoods being snatched away by corporations and their lives by bombs from drones and shells from guns. There are veritable tornados, earthquakes, and fires of systemic violence wreaking chaos upon creation.

And yet I know so many who by all rights should be paralyzed by fear who stand on the exposed surfaces of mountains in the midst of this chaos, rather than hide out in the cave. It is these prophets in our midst who have inspired me to start forcing FEAR to loosen its grip on me. For, who am I to let ANYTHING get between me and the great I AM? And who are we to fear the fullness of what God desires for our lives? How can we deny the beauty that God has in store when we finally listen to that still small voice and become active in the work of justice, righteousness, and love!? And become thorns in the side of the powers and principalities? And become troublers of Israel? And become builders of communities that can cause the very mountains to tremble with the power of a people who have turned their hearts back to God?

I know that I will always have some fear. I have fear about what changes transformation will cause in my life. I have fear that I will never actually know transformation. I have fear that I will mess it up somehow. I have fear that maybe I have it all wrong to begin with I have fear about what will happen tomorrow, tonight, this afternoon, the next hour, the next minute. I have fear that things will not be the same. I have fear that things will be the same.

But YHWH is breathing. YHWH is commanding us to come outside and listen. We can go outside and listen. We can be transformed. We can transform this world. And we don't have to do so alone. For, there is somebody else who multiplied meager amounts of food into abundance. There is somebody else who raised people from the dead. There is somebody else who had authority over the prophets, who rebuilt the temple, who had control over the very elements. He stood with Elijah on the mountain top. Some like Herod thought he might even be Elijah back from the dead. He spoke truth to power, he troubled the emperor, he was killed, he was raised again, and he ascended into heaven. He breathed his Spirit into the disciples gathered in the Upper Room. He breathes life anew into us with every breath we take, saying:

"Be not afraid. Know that I am with always. Even until the end of the age."

May we ever breathe with the breath of YHWH. Amen.

When Morning Gilds the Skies

LAUDES DOMINI 6.6.6 D



340 When Peace like a River

