

Day 62 – Apr. 25

Today I want to reflect on the power, importance, and physics of prayer. When it comes to prayer, Elijah is a star, and we can learn a lot about prayer from him.

For some today, prayer is an addendum to our spiritual life, something we do when we have the time or need, but not foundational. For some it is a mystical experience we don't understand, so we don't focus on it too hard. For some it is a formula we recite that has little to do with conversation.

One of my favorite stories was of a man with terminal cancer in the hospital. Every time his pastor visited, the man had a chair next to his bed. "Did someone just leave?" the pastor asked the on the first visit. "No, that is where Jesus sits when we talk," the man replied. And visit after visit, the empty chair sat by the bed and Jesus and the man talked. Finally the pastor came to visit and found the man passed away. But not in his bed. Instead, the man had his head resting gently on the chair, right where Jesus' lap had been.

Prayer is power, and it is confession, and it is request, and it is conversation, and it is quiet listening, and it is relationship, and it is so much more. Prayer is a gift granted to God's people, that we can come to the Almighty Creator of all things with any request we have. And all are answered. Sometimes the answer is, "yes, and here's more." Sometimes it's, "Yes, but let's wait awhile." Sometimes it's, "No, I love you too much for that." But every prayer is answered.

Often, we try to use prayer to manipulate God to do what we want. This is what Baal's prophets were doing. As their prayer increased from calling on his name to dancing to shouting, to cutting themselves to raving, they thought they had to do more and more to get their god to act, to manipulate him into obeying their requests. Then Elijah walks us and offers a simple, humble, tiny prayer, and fire blasts from heaven, not by Elijah's machinations, but by God's will.

And God wants to make this point crystal clear. "Elijah, what are you doing here?" God asks when Elijah hides away in a cave on Mt. Sinai from Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah seems to have forgotten the God who rains fire from heaven when His people are in need. So God makes the point again. He sends a blast of wind that tears at the mountain. Then comes an earthquake that shakes the earth's very foundation. Then a fire that sweeps across the face of Sinai. Loud, expressive, powerful expressions of prayer. But then comes what we've come to call "the still, small voice" of God, quiet like Elijah's prayer at the altar. And again, now that Elijah is reminded of his past requests, God asks, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

We love glitz, pomp, displays, and enormity. But whether through a small, humble prayer at an altar, through a still small voice, or through a simple carpenter from Nazareth, God doesn't often act in huge, earth-rending ways. More often, He communicates through the quiet, the stillness, the humility and peace of nature, or a prayer room, or a conversation with a seemingly empty chair in a hospital room. Remember that when you go to prayer and question whether God is even listening. Maybe it's not Him who needs to [listen better](#).