



The Nourishing Vocation Project

Engaging the Living Word

[1 Kings 19:11-18](#)

What is this particular text?

- Turning point
- Redirection
- Assurance and call
- Meeting with God

How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Emphasizes God's power over political affairs
- Depicts God as one who calls to those who are afraid
- Shows a different experience / manifestation of God
- Shows us that even prophets needed to relinquish power from time to time

How can this text function in the church today?

- Reminds us that discerning when to let go of power is important
- Challenges us not to cling to power out of fear for our future
- Encourages us to lean on God's power when we are afraid, not our own
- Reminds us that being prophetic isn't easy

What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- As a transgender person, I relate to fearing for my life. I have gone to God many times, scared of what might happen to me
- I'm jealous of Elijah. Often when I've been most scared God feels distant; but Elijah, afraid for his life, gets to talk directly to God
- I'm surprised at God's wrath toward the Baal worshippers

What do you have to say to the text?

- I wonder how Elijah felt when God told him to go to the wilderness of Damascus
- Elijah already seems so tired. How will he survive this next journey?
- God is clearly angry with the Baal worshippers. I wonder how these people felt

What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Fear and power are a precarious mixture
- God was not found within the chaos of the natural phenomena, but in the silence

What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- Unwillingness to let go of power for fear of losing privilege
- Fear disguised with grasps for power
- Naming what we are afraid of is important
- Crises of Today:



- A need to center the voices of those who are most afraid for their lives
 - Transgender and gender non-conforming people
 - Disabled people
 - People who cannot access the medical care they need
 - BIPOC people

What do you see within yourself?

- My own fear
- A continued need to discern when it's best to let go of power
- My own longing for God to draw me in

What is the context – textual and historical?

- Follows Elijah defeating the prophets of baal and the end of a drought, which Elijah predicted
- Precedes Elisha becoming Elijah's disciple

What questions does this text raise for you?

- What does the voice of God sound like?
- What does it feel like to experience the "voice" of God?
- Did Elijah feel small before God?

What words/themes seem of particular import?

- "a sound of sheer silence"
- "they are seeking my life"
- handing over power
- the voice of God
- fear

What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?

- God prioritizes those who are most afraid for their lives
- God shows up
- God shows up in surprising ways
- God enters into fear with assurance

What is the as-over-againstness of this text?

- Letting go of power is hard, but necessary
- Our own power will not save us
- Clinging to power doesn't erase fear
- Fear of giving up power gets in the way of God's mission

Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?

- God calls to those who are afraid
- God gets angry
- God is fierce



- God can be encountered, we just might not encounter God where we expect to

What have others said about this text?

- [“Not only was the Lord](#) not in the wind or in the earthquake or in the fire, but there were these moments when Elijah was looking for God in those moments, in those things... It can be really tempting, even for progressive Christians, to be like, “was that a sign from God?” Brian G. Murphy
 - “I love the fact that we have, in the Scripture, someone who is a great prophet... who is very clearly in this passage going through a depressive episode.” Fr. Shannon (Shay) Kearns
- [“As in the story of Exodus](#), God might intervene in visibly powerful ways such as a strong wind that tears apart mountains and breaks open rocks (19:11) or through earthquakes and fires (19:12). Such divine intervention to send a message to the oppressed (encouraging them to keep on) and the oppressors (warning them to let go) might address the human longing that cries out, “I have had enough” (19:4). At other times, divine help comes through the form of a whisper that says, “Get up and eat.” Both (and possibly more) postures are political and imbued with theological power.” John Boopalan
- [“In 1 Kings 19 two things](#) bring Elijah out of his state of discouragement and lethargy. One is a new commission from God, and the other is the assurance that God’s cause has a future in the world which does not depend only on Elijah’s personal success or lack thereof. A sturdy faith capable of weathering opposition and failure requires both these elements: a strong sense of call to a mission, and a recognition that God’s cause in the world far transcends any individual’s efforts on behalf of that mission.” Dan Epp-Tiessen

What will I teach or proclaim?

- God prioritizes those who are most afraid for their lives. This does not mean that God doesn’t love or value those who have the privilege of not having to wonder if/when they will be next. Our wellbeing as humans, as part of God’s creation, is interdependent. We rely on one another and on creation to meet our needs. The fact that there are people actively fearing for their lives because of misused privilege and misplaced fear (and that creation is in crisis) is a sign that something is very, very wrong. God calls those of you with more privilege to discern the ways in which you cling to power out of fear, and to let go of power when necessary.
- To those of you who fear for their lives: None of the words I have will take away your fear. My words alone are not enough to save my life as a transgender person, and I know they aren’t enough to save yours either. But know this: God has given us to one another. Just as God drew Elijah in, you and I, we can still draw each other in, hold each other close, name our fears to one another, be the presence of Jesus to one another.