

Daily Devotional, August 5, 2021 God's GPS System

The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" I Kings 19:11-13 (NIV)

In the Hebrew scriptures, the Lord asks a lot of questions. God is the great inquirer in the book of Genesis. When God finds Cain after he has killed his brother Abel, God asks questions: "Where is your brother Abel?" "What have you done?" When God finds Adam and Eve after they have both eaten of the fruit of the tree that was in the middle of the garden, God asks questions: "Where are you?" "Who told you that you are naked?" "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

It seems God likes to know where people are. The first questions are always about location. God asks Cain: where is your brother Abel? God asks Adam: where are you? God asks Elijah: what are you doing here? But, in all three of these stories, God is not simply making conversation. God knows that each of these men would rather not have a conversation with God at that moment. Cain just killed his brother because he was mad at God. Adam has just disobeyed God's one rule. Elijah has just escaped with his life and feels very underappreciated by God.

But God handles relationships wisely. God does not gossip to the hosts of heaven or complain to the mountains and the stars. God comes directly to these men, finds them where they are, and gives them a chance to tell their side of the story. In the sheer silence, God is present as a witness to their shame and confusion. In the sheer silence, God allows space for these men to share their grief and their disappointment in their brothers, their wives, themselves, and possibly even in God. It is only then that God moves toward discussing the painful and necessary consequences and actions that will eventually lead to new life.

Today it feels like the great wind, so strong that it splits mountains and breaks rocks into pieces, and the earthquake and the fire come to us as social media storms and non-stop news that feeds on divisiveness. Take time to seek out the sheer silence, and then start listening. God is there in the silence and might be wondering what you have to say. Do you care?

God of the wind, the storm, the earthquake, the fire, the social media, the news media, and of the sheer silence, speak to us in this time of confusion. Lead us to new life through your holy wisdom and your overwhelming love. We pray in the name of Jesus, the Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.