

Last week we read about King Solomon building the temple in Jerusalem and all 12 tribes of Israel are united under one kingdom, to build the temple Solomon highly taxed the people and forced them to work under harsh conditions. Rahaboum, his son, comes to power and promises more of the same and the kingdom splits in two. Today's reading about Elijah focuses on the Northern Kingdom during the rule of Ahab and his wife queen Jezebel. We know from archeology Ahab is likely the most powerful king of Israel and we know from the Bible he was also one of the most unfaithful. Elijah appears on the scene as a prophet declaring the word of the Lord saying that because Israel is worshipping Baal there will be a draught. Elijah flees north to Zaraphath. After three years of draught Elijah returns and challenges the 450 prophets of Baal to a dual on Mt. Carmel—each group builds an altar to their god, places a bull on it and prays to their God to start it on fire—and all of Israel gathers to watch. Baal's prophets go first, nothing happens. They pray and plead and after a few hours Elijah says to them, "This is a real bummer guys, I bet your god is on vacation today or maybe had some other important godly thing to do." This is like the original sporting even trash talk. Elijah wins, the rain comes and that is where today's reading begins.

Reading: 1 Kings 19: 1-18

A month ago we read from Exodus where God frees the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and after one month they say, "Would it not have been better that we die in Egypt where our bellies were full, versus starve to death out here in the wilderness?" And Elijah says almost the same thing, while also out in the wilderness. He is consumed with fear. He is feeling far from God, feeling helpless, lost and abandoned—stricken with grief. Elijah has this deep sense of God's absence. But God gives him food and drink and sends him to Mt. Horeb—

the place where Moses met God and God gave Israel the 10 commandments. Once there Elijah waits but God isn't in the Earthquake, God isn't in wind and God isn't in the fire. Elijah, perhaps Israel's greatest prophet, a great saint, is full of fear and grief, and he waits. And then comes a still, small voice.

If anyone is a modern day saint it's Mother Teresa. About ten years ago some of her letters were printed in Time magazine. She wrote to a friend, "Jesus has a very special love for you but as for me the silence and the emptiness is so great, that I look and do not see, listen and do not hear." Mother Teresa had a deep sense of Christ as the absent one. Many that we admire, as bearing witness to the power of God, have done so, not with overwhelming 24-7 fullness, but a deep sense that even in the struggles God continues to minister in and to and through them. God promises and provides. God is with Elijah, feeds Elijah, calls Elijah to Mt. Horeb and sends him out with mission.

Today is All Saints day, when we lift up the saints in our lives who have passed away. Four people from Peace have passed this year, but amongst our families and friends many more have died. Death is hard. And I want you to know how sorry I am for your loss. And this worship is a way that the Peace community surrounds you with our love and bears witness to you of God's love for you.

Where ever you are in your grieving, maybe it's still a gaping wound, maybe some scar tissue has formed—know that God is with you in your grief and that God shows up in different ways. Some times God's presence feels like a pillar of fire or an earthquake, but often God's voice is still and small. When God shows up God is giving us simple things like bread or a friend's

listening ear. Whether it feels like it or not God is with you. Jesus is in the midst of our fear and grief.

One of the Bible stories I often share at funerals is when Jesus' friend Lazarus dies. When Jesus comes to the town and encounters Lazarus' sisters Jesus weeps. The Bible says Jesus is shook to the core of his being. Jesus wept. We have a God that knows what it means to grieve and to experience loss. God is with you; in the midst of your hard places. God knows what you are going through. The love of God surrounds you, lifts you up and carries you. Jesus love knows no boundaries, nothing can stop God's love your you. God is with us in our joy. God is with us in our pain. Our God is with us. Amen.