



THE BREATH OF GOD

1 KINGS 19:1-18



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"And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stop at the entrance of the cave."

1 Kings 19:12-13a

In 1 Kings 19, we pick up with the prophet Elijah after, defeating Baal and his prophets. He is worn out, lonely, fearful, and depressed. He runs into the wilderness and is ministered to by an angel. He is fed and sleeps. Then travels 40 days and nights to Mt. Horeb. Elijah and God speak about Elijah's exhaustion, loneliness, and fear. God tells him to go stand on the mountaintop because He is going to pass by (show Himself). Hurricane force winds come - not God. An earthquake - not God. Fire (maybe lightening) - still not God. Then the sound of stillness or silence or a soft whisper or a thin silence, or a gentle and quiet whisper or the sound of gentle blowing, as other translations describe it. That WAS God. Elijah covers his face and converses again with God.

So why did God appear to Elijah in the quiet? Elijah had had quite a bit of experience with God's power and might (see 1 Kings 18). But did he really know God's closeness? Maybe God appeared to Elijah in this way so that he would have to draw near to Him. Elijah is struggling; he doesn't necessarily need to

remember God's power and might. He needs to be reminded of God's nearness, His kindness, His love. You can only hear a soft whisper or a gentle wind when you stop talking, still yourself, and draw near to the speaker. Perhaps God was reminding Elijah that he never has been alone.

For many years I spent my summers at a camp in New Hampshire. I can remember walking along paths or sitting on rocks at the waters' edge and suddenly feeling a warm breath of air on my face. But no trees were moving. No one else ever appeared to notice the brief kiss of warm air. I began to equate these occurrences to God reminding me of His nearness. I wonder if this is a bit like what Elijah experienced. Maybe it was less about the sound(s) he heard (or didn't hear) and more about the feeling of God's presence. Maybe the air was heavier, stiller, warmer even, and Elijah knew that God was near. Maybe Elijah knew God was near because he was expecting Him to be. It makes me wonder how often I miss the presence of God because I'm not expecting Him to be with me. Do you expect God to be near to you?

Lord God, thank you for being mighty and powerful and a warm breath on our faces. May we know Your love and great delight, as we draw near to You. May we know Your nearness and celebrate it anew this advent season. Amen.

What if all of Elijah's mighty deeds for God didn't teach him who God was. But when he stopped doing and was quiet, He was able to experience the breath of God on his face. And then he knew God's goodness, kindness, and love by that gentle puff. What if we were so close to God that we can feel His breath upon our faces? What would that look like for you?