

November 7 2021

All Saints Sunday

1 Kings 19:1-18

Young People's message: This morning we listen to the story of how God spoke to Elijah. God spoke to him on a mountain. That seems to be God's favorite place to speak to us. However the thing that is interesting is that God spoke to Elijah in a whisper in the wind. This was not an earthshattering moment with earthquakes fire and lighting. God chose to speak to Elijah through something we experience every day. We all have experience the wind at our back or in our face. The wind is a very common thing. Yet this one time the wind blew, God chose to speak to Elijah in the form of a whisper. God makes the common things very powerful when He chooses to use them. Breezy question, could God speak to us as we are getting off the school bus and walking home? Sure He could.

God also spoke to Moses on a mountain too. This got me thinking, which can be dangerous, I wondered if there were similarities between Moses and Elijah and how God used them. Let me tell you, I was surprised at what I found. This is just some of what I discovered.

Moses announced the plagues of Egypt. Exodus 7-11

Elijah announced a drought in the land. 1 Kings 17:1

Moses called down fire from Heaven. Exodus 9:23-24

Elijah called down fire from Heaven. 1 Kings 18:38, 2Kings 1:10-14

Seems like Elijah did it twice.

Moses caused the Red Sea to part. Exodus 14:21

Elijah caused the Jordan River to part. 2 Kings 2:8

After passing through the Red Sea, Moses sees Pharaoh's chariots trapped in the water.

After crossing the Jordan River, Elijah was taken into Heaven by horses and a chariot of fire.

Moses fasted for 40 days and 40 nights on Mt. Horeb. He talked with God amid earthquakes, fire and smoke. Exodus 19: 16-20

Elijah fasted for 40 days and 40 nights atop Mt. Horeb also. He too talked to God amid wind, earthquakes and fire. 1 Kings 19:8-18

Both Moses and Elijah did not see death. God took both men up into Heaven. Moses was taken up into Heaven before they crossed into the promised land. Elijah was taken up into Heaven in a fiery chariot.

There are many similarities between Moses and Elijah's lives. They are not the same. God seems to repeat certain events probably because we were not listening the first few times. The important point is that Moses and Elijah listened to God when He spoke to them. They spoke with Him often and over time, I would say they had a special bond and closeness with God. God used the earthquakes, fire and wind to get our attention before He spoke. Only later does He use the simple and subtle things in our lives to speak with us. Remember that we need to have ears to hear and eyes to see, as Jesus would say, to hear and listen to God.

Adult's message: Luther is quoted as saying, "simul justus et peccator." Meaning that we are simultaneously justified and a sinner. Luther was actually saying that we are at the same time, but in a different sense, righteous and sinful.

Luther is well grounded in his statement. 1John 1-8 makes it a bit clearer, "If I claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." St. Paul was able to refer to himself as a saint while at the same time calling himself the "chief of sinners". So Luther coined this phrase as a way of describing this reality.

Are you confused yet? I promise it will get better unless I sinfully screw the explanation up. The idea of the Christian as being both sinner and saint at the same time revolves around identity. The designation of sinner does not describe the core of the Christian's identity. In this situation the term sinner is not synonymous with our identity. I can be a husband, pastor, teacher and musician. These things identify certain truths about me. Yet they do not define who I am.

When we call ourselves sinners we are identifying something about ourselves. The reality of life here on earth is that we all sin and fall short of God's glory. For Christians our definitive identity is not a sinner. Our ultimate identity is in the fact that we are Christ's. As long as we are on this side of the resurrection we will always be prone to sin. As Christians we take great comfort in the fact that the Holy Spirit has infiltrated all aspects of our life. Simul Justus et peccator is just a description of the human life here. It describes the way life actually is.

Luther was quick to point out that the division between sinner and saint is not 50%/50%. They are total realities at the same time. As Christians we are totally righteous before God. The perfection of Christ has been

imputed to us and we are justified on the basis of His finished work here on earth. Remember that nothing can separate us from God's love. His love is not dependant on what we do or don't do. It is completely dependant on what Jesus Christ has done for us. This is why we are saints.

On the flip side of the coin, we are human beings with free will. We all have real problems, real pains, real anxieties, real faults and failures. Yet in the midst of real life we are simultaneously saints and sinners. St. Paul understood this and that is why he said he is a saint and chief sinner. This is encouraging and gives us hope to continue on with this life. I am not alone in my struggles as a Christian. As Red Green said, we are all in this together.

As Christians, our identity is rooted in Jesus's accomplishments and not our sins. Luther said, "When the devil tells me I'm a sinner, he does me a favour because, Jesus Christ died for sinners." Brennan Manning wrote, "To live by grace means to acknowledge my whole life story, the light side and the dark. In admitting my shadow side I learn who I am and what God's grace means. My deepest awareness of myself is that I am deeply loved by Jesus Christ and I have done nothing to earn it or deserve it." Amen to that, Pastor D