

June 26, 2022
Third Sunday after Pentecost
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

1 Kings 19:9-21 (Luke 9:51-62; Galatians 5:1, 13-25)

GOD IS IN CONTROL.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from 1st Kings, the 19th chapter, which you heard read earlier.

After 430 years of discouragement and despair, the Lord God answered the prayers of His people Israel and led them with a mighty arm out of slavery in Egypt. (cf: Exodus 12:40–41) On this past Friday, after 50 years of discouragement and despair, our Lord God answered the prayers of His people in the United States as the Supreme Court overturned Roe vs. Wade. Much like the Israelites breaking into song after crossing the Red Sea, that the Lord had triumphed gloriously, throwing horse and rider into the sea (cf: Exodus 15:1), Friday, Christians around the United States offered up their praise and thanksgiving to God singing the Doxology and Te Deum.

Three days after crossing the Red Sea, the Israelites were in the wilderness and without water. And when they did find water, it was bitter. They doubted God and, in their thirst, with parched lips, they grumbled against Moses and against God. (cf: Exodus 15:22–25)

For all who are pro-life, Friday was indeed a joyous day; however, it is only the *end of the beginning* of the battle to end abortion. Today it seems that our nation is out of control and personal relationships are forever fractured. So, there will be times when you feel like you are thirsting in the wilderness. But do not doubt God. **He** is in control. There will be ongoing protests and threats and court battles. There will be anger and hatred hurled toward those who stand for life. People will vandalize churches and women’s pregnancy centers. While it might not appear so, God is working great thing. He has much more work for His disciples to perform. There are still going to be young and afraid expectant mothers in need of love, direction, and support. There are still going to be babies in the womb and orphaned children in need of families and our physical care, support, and prayers.

When faced with backlash over the Supreme Court decision, we must continue to humbly speak the truth in love, giving the Biblical defense of life from womb to the tomb so that others might hear the Gospel and come to know and love our Lord and Giver of Life, Christ Jesus. Bless those who persecute you. Do not repay evil with evil. Leave all vengeance to God. (cf: Romans 12:14–21) Christ has forgiveness for all mankind. He has forgiveness for abortion, and He has peace for those who are haunted by it and all other sin. Cling to Christ who was crucified *for you* to save you from your transgression. He has an endless supply of mercy and healing. If you need to

privately confess your sin, any sin, and hear our Lord's Word of Absolution, please come see me. God throws your sins away as far as the east is from the west.

God is in complete control even when it doesn't look like it. Even though you and I pray: "**Come soon Lord Jesus,**" our Lord is patient so that all might be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (cf: 1 Timothy 2:4) Before His ascension into heaven Jesus said that as you go on your way, make disciples of all nations by means of baptizing and teaching all that He had commanded. (cf: Matthew 28:19–20)

What exactly is a disciple? In the original language, the word *disciple* is defined as "**a learner, an apprentice**" (cf: BDAG, 441) like those who believed in Jesus and followed Him, learning at the foot of the Master. And how are disciples made? By means of baptizing and teaching.

By virtue of your Baptism you are a *disciple* of Jesus. At the font, God adopted you as His own child and commissioned you as a *learner* and *apprentice* of our Lord Jesus Christ. You have been taught and are continually taught our Lord's commands. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion on the last day. (cf: Philippians 1:6) That is, unless you decide the cost of discipleship is too expensive: meaning too much work, or too limiting to your felt needs and desires.

In our Gospel text this morning, Jesus teaches the exact cost of discipleship. The cost is not a specific dollar value, but is summed up in three requirements. The first requirement for discipleship is hearing and receiving Jesus and His Word by those whom He sends. (cf: Luke 9:52–53) Second, is give up any hope of hanging on to the treasures in this present world. Third is that trusting and following Jesus take priority over any family or man-made ties on this earth. Our Lord commands that you, present-day disciple, do not look back to embrace the treasures of the world or the love of your family – but – press on toward the goal for the prize of eternal life. (cf: Philippians 3:14)

Our Lord God is in control. He loves and cares for all of His disciples, even when it doesn't look like it. We see this in our Old Testament lesson today. God called Elijah as a prophet to turn the people of Israel away from false gods and back to the Lord God with his prophetic word and miracles. And God worked amazing miracles through him.

After foretelling the people of a years long drought, Elijah hid out by a brook where God fed him by ravens, and he drank from the brook. (cf: 1 Kings 17:3–7) When the brook dried up because of the drought he heeded God's command and traveled to Zarephath to stay with a widow who would feed him and her son. The widow only had a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug, but God sustained them, replacing the flour and oil for many days. (cf: 1 Kings 17:8–16) Then, the widow's son became ill and died. But Elijah took the boy and laid him on the bed and pleaded with God to raise the boy from the dead. And the Lord listened to Elijah restored the child's life. (cf: 1 Kings 17:17–24)

Next, Elijah challenged 450 prophets of Baal to a contest of sorts to determine who was the true God. Baal never answered but the Lord God answered with fire from heaven, proving that He was God and Baal was not. Elijah had all 450 prophets of Baal put to death. (cf: 1 Kings 18:20–

40) This angered Jezebel and she swore an oath to put Elijah to death on the next day. (cf: 1 Kings 19:1–2) So Elijah fled.

As our text opens, Elijah is now hiding in a cave. He had been on the run and hid from danger before, but this time is different. Our text says:

“And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (1 Kings 19:10)

God asks the same question twice in our text. And when He asks: *“What are you doing here,”* it is as if He is really asking: *“What are you doing here, instead of where you are supposed to be?”* Twice, Elijah replies that he has been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, and that all the people of Israel have forsaken God, and he is the only remaining prophet, and the people seek to kill him. (cf: 1 Kings 19:10) He is suffering from discouragement and despair, thinking that God had abandoned him. He is burned out, afraid, and ready to die.

You know exactly how he is feeling because you have been there, feeling as if all of your Christian labors and prayers have gone to waste, that God never answers your prayers, and feel as if He has abandoned and forsaken you. You get discouraged when you feel that you are alone in your Christian walk and when it seems that all the people you share the Good News of Jesus with, could not care less about forgiveness and salvation. Especially those family members and former parishioners who were taught and catechized beside you when as you grew up, but they have now rejected faith and their Savior. You despair that perhaps your faith is in vain. Your jealousy for the Lord becomes lost amongst your jealousy for the things of this world.

But take heart dear disciple of Christ. The devil is the source and author of all doubt, discouragement, and despair. He desires to steal your faith. God allows him to trifle with you so that you cling alone to Christ who was crucified ***for you*** to save you from your sins. Our Lord God is in control. He loves and cares for all of His disciples, even when it doesn’t look like it.

As Elijah stood on the mountain in the opening of the cave, by the power of God, the wind breaks rocks, the earth shakes, and a fire rages. But God was not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. After these, God arrives in the silence of a low whisper. (cf: 1 Kings 19:11–12) In His almighty power, God can answer your prayers in great and mighty ways. But like He demonstrated to Elijah, His usual way of operating is through His Word.

God had not abandoned Elijah. Elijah was so busy feeling sorry for himself that he had stopped trusting in God. Indeed, from our perspective and Elijah’s the situation was pretty desperate, but God was still in control and still had more work for Elijah to do. He assured Elijah that he was not alone, and He was sending him out to do the work God had given to him to do.

Your situations in life can appear pretty desperate. But God ***has not*** and ***never will*** abandon you. He is still in control. He sent His Son Jesus into the world as the perfect Prophet who alone is perfectly jealous for the Lord, who was perfectly put to death on the cross to pay the debt of the sins of the world: sins of abortion, your sins of despair and doubt, sins of sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, enmity, strife, jealousy, and the list goes on. (cf: Galatians 5:19–21)

By virtue of God's call, Elijah was sent out as His prophet and was guided by the Holy Spirit. By virtue of your Baptism you are a *disciple* of Jesus and have been granted and are guided the Holy Spirit. As God fed Elijah in the wilderness, God feeds and nourishes you in your wilderness through His Word and Sacrament, forgiving you of your sin and strengthening your faith.

Like with Elijah, there is more work to do. God promises that you are not alone and that His Word and Church will remain forever. (cf: Isaiah 40:8) And He sends you out to do the things He has given you to do: loving your neighbor, sharing the Gospel so that disciples can be made, and helping young expectant mothers and all who are in need. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you can now bear fruits of the Spirit:

"... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control... ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Galatians 5:22–24)

Trusting God, you can continue to humbly speak the truth in love, giving a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. (cf: 1 Peter 3:15) Cling to Christ who was crucified **for you** to save you from your sin. He has an endless supply of mercy and healing. He is in control. Even when it doesn't look like it.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.