

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY AUGUST 4, 2019

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"i, I, and Aye!"

Based on 1 Kings 19:9-13

I went to school with a man who was going to be fine preacher. He understood his Bible; he was compassionate towards others; he understood the politics of church life and ministry; and he was a decent preacher. But as ordination interviews drew closer, his love of the Lord began to be clouded by the role and responsibilities of leadership. There was always a reason, it seemed, why the ordination process was biased; why the doctrine was not correct; why the timing was not working out. In the end, he backed away from the ordination process, finished his degree, and turned his back on the church. He had the 'i' figured out. He had the great "I am" figured out. But he was never able to say to his Lord, "Aye! I will follow You."

Elijah was in a bit of a pickle: out there in the desert with little to eat, and less to drink, the whole world on his track, and few places to hide. Have you ever lost more by being right, and wishing for all the world, you could have been wrong, just to keep the peace? Well, this is how Elijah felt.

Living in a time when his king had made an eyebrow raising alliance with a foreign power, the Chosen People found themselves with two 'gods' on Sunday morning as part of the sketchy compromises of this new alliance: YHWH, the God of the Israelites, and Baal, the god of the pagans. Of course, this did not sit well with Elijah, a prophet of YHWH, a dedicated servant of the Lord, and voice of reason in a time when reason, it would appear, had been thrown out the window. (sound familiar?)

"WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE,
ELIJAH?"

~ 1 KINGS 19:9, 13

As luck would have it, Elijah soon found himself in a life and death game show entitled, "My God is Better than Your God!" Can you guess who won? Of course YHWH won! Which immediately put Elijah on the hot seat, running for his life, his friends dead or dying in the streets, and a hefty price on his head. Elijah ran as far as he could, left his servant in

the local pub on the edge of the desert, and ran some more. He was done. He wanted to die. He'd had it up to his eyeballs with this 'faithful servant' business. He was sick and tired of being the only sensible voice on the street corner that no one listened to anyway.

So, Elijah moped. And he moped some more. He thought up all the reasons why this whole prophet thing was just a bunch of hot air. He had the pity party going strong, when a voice came to him:

"What are you doing here, Elijah?" (v9)

So out came all the carefully prepared reasons (excuses?) *"I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." (v10)*

I don't know about you, but they seem to be rather good reasons to me!

Suddenly, Elijah was shaken to the very core. Quickly, he took refuge in a cave. First it was a great wind, then the

earth shook like it had never shaken before, and finally, a rush of fire swept over the land.

Then, there was nothing. Nothing but silence.

A stillness settled on Elijah's heart.

In barely a whisper, Elijah spoke out loud into the inky dark of the cave:

"i am here!"

And a voice responded,

"I am here too."

There was a pause...and then a familiar question,

"What are you doing here, Elijah?" (v13)

There was more silence, and then in the stillness, Elijah replied,

"Aye! I will go back."

God calls each and every one of us to a particular task in this world. Young or old, arthritic or ornery, passionate or listless, gifted with many talents or as creative as a wooden toothpick. God calls each and every one of us to a particular task in the world. There is no higher task in this world, than to present yourself before God; to say, "Here i am Lord, ready to serve the Great I Am."

> The church has made a great enterprise over the centuries to lift up the Call of Ministry and claim that it is a higher calling than others.

> The world has made a great enterprise over the centuries to lift up politicians or corporate CEO's and claim

that they have a higher calling than others.

But God has called each and every one of us to a particular task in this world, religious, or otherwise.

- Sometimes, those tasks are readily seen by the obvious talents and knacks we were born with.

- Sometimes, we have had the opportunity to study certain skills, to be taught by marvelous teachers over the years, in classrooms, kitchens, machine shops, and family farms.

- Sometimes, we have been thrust into an expected situation, and found courage and creativity within ourselves, we did not know existed.

- Sometimes, we accomplish our call early in life.

- Sometimes, we are in our comfortable armchair of retirement before we discover our true gift to the world.

But know this.

Each time, someone answers the call, embraces the gift's given, and gives them back to the world in some way, the world is a better place for it.

- If baking an apple pie brings a smile to a lonely widow, than the world is a better place for it.

- If understanding numbers and budgets helps a floundering company or fledgling charity put air under its wings, then the world is a better place for it.

- If your gift of the gab can spread cheer to a grumpy world, then the world is a better place for it.

And our world today, desperately needs to be reminded that each of us has the ability, in some small way, to make things better; to affect the change we keep talking about; to inspire others to dig deep within themselves to find that 'still voice' which whispers and waits.

It begins with our voice speaking into the stillness and saying, "I am here. Aye! I will go."

So,

"What are you doing here, Elijah?"

"What are you doing here, Elijah?"