1 Kings 19:11-12 Then the Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is passing by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains and shattered rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there was a soft, whispering voice.

There is so much to say about this section of God’s Holy Word and what it says to us. Here is a portion of the history of the prophet Elijah. I can tell you, Elijah did great things because of the Lord. The Lord has Elijah call for a draught, and it happens. The Lord during the time of this draught, miraculously feeds Elijah by having the ravens bring him bread and meat every morning and every night. When the stream Elijah was camped by dries up the Lord sends Elijah to the widow of Zarephath where a jar of flour and a pitcher of oil doesn’t run out until the draught is over. Oh, yeah, remember the widow’s son is going to die and Elijah is going to be allowed to bring that boy back to life. Elijah with the Lord’s guidance does some marvelous things.

The most spectacular is the one that brings us to Elijah’s current situation. Just a few days or so before we find Elijah in this cave, we find Elijah involved in a tremendous showdown with the prophets of Baal. In this showdown, all you had to do was get your god to burn up, hey, just light the offering that you had set before him. Do you remember how it went? The Baal prophets prayed, danced, shouted, and eventually in desperation began to cut themselves to try and get their god to answer. This went on the whole day. And then finally, Elijah takes his altar, which had a trench around it. Has water poured over this altar and its sacrifice until the trench itself is full of water. Then Elijah simply prays and the Lord our God sent down a fire that consumed the sacrifice, the altar, the dirt and even the water in the ditch. It was a great victory and display of God’s mighty power. The end result is the death of the 850 prophets of Baal.

Following this Elijah and King Ahab made their way to the capital with Elijah out running the chariot of the King. Here is where distress hits Elijah. When he gets to the capital, instead of rejoicing and a massive renewal of faith in the Lord God, the king and Queen Jezebel double down on their godlessness. Jezebel threatens to kill just about everyone and everything in her anger, and that includes God’s prophet Elijah. That’s when Elijah flees!

Seems strange doesn’t it, to flee when God has done such great things through you? Yet, if you listen to Elijah’s rehearsed words it is clear what is going through his mind. Elijah is distressed, deeply troubled, perhaps if we used today’s terminology we would say he has gone into a deep depression. He perhaps thought that his actions would lead to a great revival, to a mass return to the wonders of the true God. But when Elijah confronts more hatred and more godlessness than he ever thought could be, we find him here, fleeing in fear, filled with despair and, yes, listen to his words, wishing to die. How does the Lord help? Our theme will be: **THE HELP OF THE LORD.**

The first thing that God does is simply give assistance to Elijah. It is clear he is exhausted and in need of food. That’s all that God does at first. God sends an angel to Elijah but all the angel does is supply some bread and water. Actually this angel does it twice, supplies just the basics for Elijah and lets Elijah rest from his stress and long trip.

I will tell you I do think this is still very much how God deals with us. He may not send an actual angel as he does for Elijah, but I do think that there are those around us who end up being messengers of the Lord and sustainers of our souls. Because that is what an angel is. An angel is a messenger of the Lord. I can’t begin to tell you how many of you have served as my messengers from the Lord. You have encouraged me, watched out for me, made sure I was taking care of myself and seeing to my basic needs. It might have been your kind words or just a mention of how you have prayed for me in my work. Fact is, sometimes, many times when we face stress and difficulties, the best thing is just to take a short little break and get the basics taken care of. Get some extra rest, get some extra relaxation, get the needed nourishment your body requires and in many cases all will be well. That sure looks like the Lord’s approach. Sends an angel, not one that preaches and pokes at you, but one that just gets you the basics and helps you to get rested and refreshed. Yep, the help of the Lord is sometimes just simple.

After Elijah is refreshed we are then told he travels to Mt. Horeb. Now the text doesn’t tell us that the angel or even the Lord told him to go there, but that’s where he goes. Do you know why? Mt. Horeb is where Moses encounted the burning bush and the command to lead God’s people to freedom. Mt. Horeb is where the people under Moses’ care return and the Lord himself speaks to them and gives them his Covnenant of salvation along with the covenant of the Law. I think Elijah goes there because in his distress he goes where he hopes to find the Lord. Now, Elijah should have known that you can find the Lord anywhere, but that is beside the point. Elijah in his distress is seeking the Lord.

Might that be, perhaps better yet, isn’t this seeking something that you should consider in your stress and difficulties? That you seek out the Lord and look for his guidance. Yes, we could certainly join in prayer to the Lord which I am sure is something Elijah did and yet note that Elijah went to a place where he hoped to hear from the Lord. In a way, Mt. Horeb serves as a shadow of the Church. It reminds us that maybe, just maybe a lot of our answers and a lot of our problems can be helped just by being where the Lord is to be found. For you and me, that’s God’s Church, the Church with the tools of God’s Holy and pure Word.

And if you would, let’s just address briefly prayer. Prayer is you talking to God. God encourages us to speak with him, to take our troubles to him. God encourages us to do this with the attitude of true faith. A faith that knows God is listening and that God will answer our prayers. But please, listen up. Stop treating prayer like some sort of magic ritual or some sort of instant pipeline of power to God. Yes, pray, but after you pray, when do you listen to God? What, are you expecting some sort of idea to pop into your head, or some sort of voice telling you what to do? Where did you learn such garbage? Seriously, prayer is our talking to God, but when do you listen to God! God speaks to us in his Word. God shares his wisdom, his insight, his guidance and wonder through his Bible, the very Word of God. But be careful. I have had people tell me that before they read the Bible they pray that God would show them the answer and then they open their Bible and look for what God is telling them. Dear people that is pure superstition! Show me one passage that says God is going to speak directly to you or that God is going to specially direct you to the very words you need to read. My advice? Be in church, hear the Word of God. Learn the truths and wonders of God and then let God servants, your Pastors and teachers help you, serve as your angels, in facing life. Honestly, sometimes the superstitious things believers do is very disturbing. And don’t fancy yourself a Christian just because you say you pray a lot or call for prayer in everything. Even the heathen practice prayer, superstitiously, but they practice prayer. Make sure you grasp just what God says prayer is!

So here is Elijah at Mt. Horeb. Our text says very simply: **“Then the word of the Lord suddenly came to him, saying, ‘Why are you here, Elijah?’”** I want you to know that I am convinced that this phrase “The Word of the Lord” is always a reference in the Old Testament to a pre-incarnate appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is called the Word. Jesus is pointed to as the Creating Word. Jesus brings us the full revelation and wisdom of God in every way. I have no doubt at all in my mind that standing with Elijah in that cave right now is our Lord and Savior Jesus. He listens to Elijah. He listens to the distress and troubles of this man. He doesn’t argue or deride. He listens and then He begins his solution. The first part of the solution is that Elijah is going to be given a glimpse of the majesty and awe of God.

That’s where our text comes in. What awesome words. Listen again. “**Then the Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is passing by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains and shattered rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there was a soft, whispering voice.”**

I want you to notice how the Lord impresses Elijah. A wind that tore apart the mountain! I am sure Elijah was filled with fear. An earthquake that shook everything. What power there is here! Then a fire. People, this is by and large a barren rocky place, and yet clearly there is what I will call a “raging fire” happening. Behind all of these things are the power and awe of the Lord, seriously, just a small part of the power and awe of the Lord. But we are told that the “presence of the Lord” was not in any of those things. And with that comes the **“soft, whispering voice.”** Here is the Lord.

You remember that. That Lord doesn’t have to come with displays of power, force, threat, and fear. He can, but that is not how the Lord chooses to come. The Lord likes to come as that “soft, whispering voice.” Think of Jesus. Not born in royalty yet more than royalty. Not born to wealth or surrounded by armies and soldiers, but more than all of that. A child born to poor parents and laid in a manger for his first bed. A child who grew up in a middle income home, some would suggest a low income home, and yet he possesses riches beyond all that the earth could produce. Nope, Jesus, the Son of God shows up as a child of a lowly carpenter living in a Roman town of which was said, **“Nazareth, can anything good come from Nazareth!”** That’s our God and Savior. Humble, quiet, and with a heart ready to serve us. Note that Elijah knew that the soft, whispering voice was the Lord!

Maybe you too should stop looking for the fantastic and mind boggling. How about just seeking the Lord in the wonder of Jesus. Seeking his love and care. Seeking his wisdom and simple majesty. Seeking the God man who came to be the our Savior. The God crucified for us. The God buried for us. The God who rose from the dead that we might grasp what really lies under that simple appearance and form. The Lord, who loves us and directs us.

Notice that Elijah gets the message. He is told do this, take care of that, go here and accomplish this. Elijah understood that all things are in the Lord’s hand. If it was part of God’s plan and purpose that a huge reformation and revival should take place, don’t you get it? It will, because He is God. If God wanted to dismiss justice and forego judgements, He could but in the name of justice and righteousness He does not. God chooses to send a Savior to pay for your sins and mine. To save us and call us to be his own dear children, not because we have to be saved, but rather because He wants to save us out of love and compassion for our souls. I can tell you, this soft whispering voice is just what I would expect and look for from the Lord. That quiet realization of his marvel as you read his Word. That mind dazzling wonder as you fathom the depths of God’s majesty and might. The total awesomeness of his love as you hear him say, **“It is finished.”** And with these quiet truths of God you know and grasp, like Elijah, that God is in control. Always and lovingly in control.

I want to tell you that as far as I can tell, Elijah, as he is training Elisha is going to continue working and serving the Lord for the next 20 years or better. He will live to see the death of Ahab and the Lord’s judgments on the people of Israel. In the end, Elijah, after this one big falter, will never falter again and when it is his time, Elijah gets taken up to heaven in a whirlwind. That’s right, Elijah is one of the few men of this world who will not experience death but rather will be taken directly into heaven to be with the Lord whom he serves so well.

What can I again tell you? Like Elijah, seek the help of the Lord. Stop looking for the fantastic and awesome and seek the Lord in that soft, whispering voice. I believe that is the Word of God, the Bible that the Lord has given us for our eternal good and benefit. It doesn’t seem like much does it? The world laughs at it, mocks it, and make no mistake, the world works hard to make sure we doubt and stop believing in the power and wisdom of that Word. Your help from God, comes through His Word. Yes, it comes first through Jesus, the Son of God who is called the Word and who died and rose to save us from the guilt and punishment of sin. He saves us by fully revealing the Father and his love and grace, for we grasp that to know Jesus is to know the Father and have that awesome and wonderful gift of eternal life and salvation.

Your help also comes through the promises of the Word of Jesus. Promises sure and certain because they are from the Lord our God. Promises that He is in control. Promises that all things serve his eternal good and purpose. Promises that just because of the victory of Jesus, we have the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. Promises that say, as we stay in the Word, the Holy Spirit will keep working in us to strengthen and increase our faith as we need. The Word, the soft whispering voice of God for our eternal good. Elijah heard it. I hope you do too! Amen.