

1 Kings 19:4-8; Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Grace to you, and peace from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

As we heard in our lessons just a few moments ago, the first reading dealt with Elijah. Elijah, in Chapter 18, has just gone one-on-one with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Ba'al. He is kind of ticked off at the people of Israel because they turned against God and they are worshiping Ba'al. It has to do with King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, but that's too much of the story that I don't want to go into right now. But, to shorten it, Elijah wins, well I should say, God wins via Elijah. And not only does God win the battle with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Ba'al, there has been a drought in the land, and as soon as this battle is over God tells Elijah to pray and the drought will end, and the drought DOES end.

Because of these two things - Elijah has very publicly beaten all of these prophets and very publicly in the name of God ended the drought - Queen Jezebel puts a price on Elijah's head and so off he goes running out into the wilderness to be all alone. He wants to take care of himself, he wants to make sure he keeps on living, but he also gets depressed. We don't necessarily get that in the little snippet of the story that we just heard tonight. But he runs off by himself, we did hear that he said, "Oh I am just going to lay down and die; I don't care any more." But what does God do? God looks after Elijah. God doesn't leave Elijah alone, but sends an angel to Elijah with food, twice, in order to make sure that he gets his rest and his nourishment.

From this little snippet from this part of the story I think that we can be reminded of two very vital things. First, that God does not abandon us, but also that we're called to live together. We're called to live together with one another in community. Because Elijah wasn't alone, God sent the angel to be with him.

In our letter to the Ephesians tonight, we are reminded of very similar aspects. We're reminded that we do indeed live in community, that we need to learn to get along with one another, to have compassion and concern and charity for each other. This past week was the second week of Family Camp down at Camp Nawaka (where I have a habit of going). Although I was not there this entire week, I was just down there a couple of nights. I was there last night, and as we were coming down from the Upper Temple worship area after the closing worship, I was walking along with one of the folks that I have gotten to know over the years, a repeat camper. She was relating to me how much her family has really enjoyed all the years they have been coming to Camp Nawaka for family camp. No, this is not necessarily a push for Nawaka's Family Camp, but one of her kids had said to her, "you know, we have had such a great week, we have all been happy and there's been no fighting, why CAN'T we be like this all the time?" Well she laughed, but I think her daughters' right. Why can't we live and love, harmony, all the time? Isn't that what the Gospel calls us to do? Isn't that how God calls us to live? I think that is what it says in this section of Ephesians.

Let me read it to us again using a slightly different version, this is the New Living Translation:

Stop telling lies, let us tell our neighbors the truth for we are all parts of the same body. And don't sin by letting your anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are angry, for anger gives a foothold to the Devil. If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead use your

hands for good work, and then give generously to others in need. Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. Do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way in which you live. Remember, God has identified you as God's very own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. Follow God's example in everything you do. Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased because that sacrifice was like a sweet perfume.

(Eph 4:25-5:2, NLT)

I think there are four points that we can get from that. The first is Charity: be kind to others, treat them the way you want to be treated. Are you stealing? STOP IT! Are you a liar? CUT IT OUT! Charity for each other means wishing good for others and behaving in your own life so that good will happen to those around you.

I think this section also talks about Compassion. To care for one another. Not in a lovey, boyfriend/girlfriend kind of way, you don't even have to LIKE each other, but I think it does call us to look out for the benefit of those around us.

This section also talks about Clemency. I needed to stick with my C's there, but we can also say Mercy. To be kind to one another . . . forgiving one another. Remember the Gospel story that Jesus is talking to the Apostles and he says that "if you are going up to the meal, and you suddenly remember that you have something against one of your brothers or sisters, STOP what you are doing, turn around and go find that person and make it right before you go up to the meal. Seek out one another to have that clemency, to have that mercy. There is an old legend that God when creating the world tried first wanted the world to be ruled by Justice. And so God said to Justice, "Go and rule this earth which I am about to create." But, it just didn't work out. The legend says that God tried, seven different times, to create a world ruled effectively by Justice, but each time the attempt was a failure. And finally on the eighth attempt, God tried something different; instead of having the world ruled by Justice, God had the world ruled by Mercy. "Go, and together with Justice, rule the world that I am about to create, because a world ruled only by Justice cannot work." A world without mercy cannot work.

And I think this section calls us to live as God wants us to live. As we heard in from our first reading, to "Be imitators of Christ" or in the example that I read, to "Follow God's example in everything you do." Now just like that young person's complaint at Camp Nawaka we know that we are not always going to accomplish this. But still this that is what we strive for, to live our lives as Christ would live. To be as much like Christ who gave himself to be a sacrifice. Now there is the Caveat that we do NOT allow our selves to be doormats. We don't allow ourselves to be used by others, but still for the glory of God, we seek to live in a Christ like way.

Elijah had to be reminded that he was not in his walk of faith by himself. In our lesson tonight we were reminded of the same things. Not only do we not walk by ourselves, not only do we walk with God, we walk with each other. In a few more verses from our first lesson, Elijah complains to God that I am the only one in all of Judah left who has not bowed to Ba'al. God had to dope slap him and say 'listen there are 7,000

*that have still not bowed down.'*

*We are called; we are reminded that we do not walk alone. We walk with God, we walk with each other. Doesn't mean we're called to be the best of friends with each other. Doesn't matter if that person next to us is a Republican or a Democrat, doesn't matter how much money they might make or if they are on welfare, doesn't matter what that person drives or where they live. What matters in how we live, what matters in how we treat each other that we need to ask ourselves first is that person a fellow believer? Are they a fellow believer in need? And if they are, what are you, what am I going to do to help them in their time of need?*

*Amen.*