

## Sermon for 13.8.17

Today's readings, I believe, speak to us about trust— about trusting in the presence of God with us.

The first reading from 1 Kings is that wonderful story about the prophet Elijah.

In the verses before today's passage, we learn that he had been summoned by an angel of God to journey to Mount Horeb,

(Traditionally known as the mount of God), for there his encounter with Yahweh is to unfold.

On Mount Horeb, Yahweh questions him, *what are you doing here Elijah?*

Elijah responds with multiple complaints –

He explains how he was zealous for the Lord: but the Israelites had forsaken the covenant and killed the prophets.

He alone is left – he feels isolated - and he explains how they seek to kill him.

Elijah wallows a little in self-pity and it seems that he is ready to throw the towel in and renounce his calling as a prophet. Yahweh listens and commands him to stand before him - which means to act once again as Yahweh's servant.

And in the divine silence that follows the earth quake, a powerful wind storm and a fire, Yahweh is present to Elijah and when Elijah repeats his complaints, Yahweh deals with each one. Elijah is to anoint two men whom Yahweh has chosen as kings, and he is to anoint his very own successor. Perhaps this is the most important calling he has ever had.

Can we identify with something of our own lives here? Elijah, ready to throw in the towel, standing before Yahweh in all his vulnerability. Things were sorted and provision was made.

Perhaps there have been situations in our own lives, when we have stood before God in trust and vulnerability and provision for us has been forthcoming.

The gospel reading today about Jesus walking on the water invites us to another level of trust.

This story is not preceded by a summons to meet God on a mountain, but rather in this story, God comes to meet his disciples.

He comes striding across all impossibilities. He walks right into the storm of life to be present there with them.

We may be familiar with the story - Jesus had gone up the mountain to pray and the disciples were left to row the boat alone across the lake, and a squall blew up.

It had happened once before, in an earlier chapter, but this time Jesus is not with them in the boat. Yet he does come to them walking on the water. The disciples are petrified when they see him.

They think he is a ghost. But he is not - he is very real and his words calm them.

*Take heart it is I. Do not be afraid.*

Jesus beckons Peter to trust him and walk with him – Peter does so - until his focus shifts from Jesus onto his fearfulness – and it is then that he begins to sink. Yet even so Jesus answers his call for help and reaches out his hand to save him.

Have you ever done something like that? Have you ever felt secure in Christ's presence while experiencing a stormy time in life, and then something happens and you get caught up in the details of whatever it is.

I know I have - yet Like Peter we can find our way back to Christ's presence by calling his name. His hand is always there to support and uphold us.

There is, I believe, a very big positive when we live a life of trust in God's presence with us. It actually lightens our load. It lightens the intensity of our approach to life.

We are not so burdened by all the "*what ifs*" in life. We are not so burdened with the desire to fix everything.

We are more likely to have a calmer approach and therefore better equipped to face whatever unfolds in life.

In a personal sense, by the way we live our very lives in trust, we witness to Christ's living presence in us and in the epistle this morning Paul tells us how important our witness is to others.

*How else will others know?* Paul writes.

On a wider scale, a lighter approach to life through our trust in God's presence with us, invites us to pray with our eyes on Christ, rather than blinded by the fear that is perpetuated by thoughts and talk of what might or might not happen.

And this is particularly relevant at this time when the threat of war overshadows us.

Our Trust in God who is closer to us than our own hearts, is beckoned by Jesus -*Take heart it is I, do not be afraid.*

May his words live in our hearts.

The Lord be with you.