

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

August 9, 2020

Old Testament Reading; 1 Kings 19: 9-18

Responsive Reading; Psalm 85: 8-13

Epistle Reading; Romans 10: 5-15

Gospel Reading; Matthew 14: 22-33

Sermon Title: Jesus said, "Come"

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Are you listening for the still small voice, or are you distracted by the wind, the earthquake, and the fire?

For us old timers we remember a news announcer, Paul Harvey, who was famous for saying, "Now the rest of the story." Today's Old Testament story and the Gospel Lesson are both examples of post scripts of famous stories.

In the Old Testament lesson Elijah had just preformed the spectacle of having challenged the prophets of Baal to a competition of who could get their God to send down fire to burn up the sacrifices that were laid out on their respective alters. Elijah won and killed the prophets of Baal but to his dismay Queen Jezebel was not only not impressed but she

actually swore to have Elijah murdered by that time the next day. Elijah ran for his life.

In the Gospel lesson Jesus had just fed the 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fishes. Jesus sent his disciples by boat to the other side of the Lake of Galilee and spent some private time in prayer. A storm came up and the disciples in the middle of the lake feared for their lives.

A side note here -- Have you ever noticed that when two people are arguing they often seem to think if they can make more noise and shout their point of view louder than the other, they can win the argument? Well, God does not work that way.

In the case of Elijah, Elijah hides in a cave and God says to him, "What are you doing here Elijah?" Elijah bemoans his state of affairs and basically says, "Everybody hates me. Nobody loves me. I'm gonna eat some worms!"

God then tells Elijah to go out of the cave because the Lord is about to pass by. Elijah does not do it. He then hears the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, but it is not until he hears the still small voice that he wraps his face in his coat and goes out to receive the instructions of God. God tells him what he should do and reassures him that he is not alone as there are actually seven thousand faithful that have not bowed the knee to Baal.

In the Gospel, Jesus walks on the water toward the boat and the disciples freak out. They think it is a ghost and quite possibly the prediction of their doom. Jesus reassures them and Peter says that if it is actually Jesus to call him to come to Jesus on the water. Jesus says, “Come”, and Peter starts to do the impossible. Peter actually walks on the water until he takes his eyes off Jesus and hears the wind and sees the waves and loses sight of the One that can make it possible for him to do the impossible. Peter starts to sink and Jesus saves him.

I think this is the point where some of my listeners are saying to themselves, “OK preach, enough with the stories. Get to the point.”

Fair enough. The point is that the Bible is not just a record of things that have happened in the past, it is a formula of how to handle things in the present.

Look around you at what we are going through today. The noise is deafening. There are people screaming that we should, “Make” or “Keep” America great while others say that only major changes in our value system can right the wrongs of America. There are those that feel that a group has been terribly mistreated and they must protest to right the wrong while others say that those are not protests, they are riots, which in and of itself is a worse wrong. There are people screaming that if we open up our country, we will all die of

COVID while others are saying that if we don't open up, our country will implode, thereby destroying all of us.

Here we run into conflicting slogans. One slogan says "United we stand, divided we fall." And another says, "If you don't stand for something you will fall for anything."

OK, these are nice slogans but they are not the words of God. God says things like, "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be, measured back to you." And in another place, it says, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and all these things will be granted unto you."

In short do not be distracted by the noise of the storms that surround you. They are of the world and Jesus has said, "I have overcome the world." Do not listen for the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire. Instead listen for the still small voice of God. Jesus is saying, "Come", to all of us. God has got this and if we will but listen for His still small voice, He will not only give us instructions of what we should do He will reassure us that we are not alone. He is with us, even unto the end of the age!

Hallelujah and Amen!