

1 Kings 19:9-18, “There he went into a cave and spent the night.”

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Rebecca writes: “Sometimes I want to disappear, but I’m not suicidal, and I don’t equate “wanting to disappear” with wanting to die. Not that I’d mind dying, as long as it were quick and painless I suppose. I don’t fear death, but that’s a whole other story.

Sometimes I want to disappear. And I don’t mean pack up my bags and hit the road. I mean cease to exist. Vanish. I know that sounds like a death wish—but trust me when I say that this is something different.

As a sensitive soul, who often feels like some sort of alien on this planet, there’s a yearning I feel sometimes to leave this realm, this earthly plane, like there’s somewhere else I belong. And yet, I know I belong right where I am.”

Is this feeling of Rebecca familiar to you? Is this idea, one that you have spoken to yourself before? That you are in a place, but you don't belong. I don't mean feelings of being in a school or a job or, maybe, a family in which you don't feel that you belong. We are going big picture, here. I mean that you feel that you are stuck in a world where you don't feel that you belong. When you take life as you imagine it should be and then compare to how actually it is, you feel a massive disconnect. You don’t understand racism. And you don’t understand terrorism. You don’t understand how people can be so terrible. You don’t understand how you and everything that makes you who you are, fit in the puzzle of this world.

Neither did Elijah. In fact, he was so despondent that we read in I Kings 19:4, *“Elijah came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. I have had enough, Lord, he said take my life.”* Alone, at night, under a broom tree, Elijah poured out his heart to God. The prophet was disappointed, discouraged, and depressed. It seemed to him that all his effort; his preaching, his warnings, his miracles, even the fire down from Mount Carmel, had been a colossal waste. Maybe even his very life.

Now there is nothing in our text that leads us to think that Elijah was suicidal. He didn’t want to kill himself. Nevertheless, he did want life to be over. But God said, No, Elijah. I am not taking you to heaven at least not today.

Elijah's response? He traveled deep into the Sinai Peninsula, far from human contact, leaving his servant behind, taking a journey of 40 days, no less. And when he got there we read, *1 Kings 19:9-18*, "***There he went into a cave.***" Elijah was very serious about disappearing. Lord, if you're not remove me from the world, I will remove from me from the world.

In some ways life was easier back then if you wanted to disappear. Elijah lived in a world that had no passports, id's, social security cards, or addresses. You want to disappear? Have at it.

But many today are trying to disappear. Many people from all echelons of life and all circles of influence do their best to try to disconnect from the world. Lives in free fall seek to distance themselves from a world which seems not to match with the way it is desired or expected to go.

There are various courses of action, substance abuse, becoming a workaholic. Maybe taking on a (false) online identity to be in cyber world what you are not in the real world. Becoming angry and pushing away any and everyone who is trying to tie you down to this existence where you just don't belong. It is all an attempt to disappear.

But God didn't let it lie, he confronted Elijah, twice, with the same question, *1 Kings 18:9* "***And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*** After Elijah offered a feeble justification, the Lord said in v.11, "***Go out and stand on the mountain...for the Lord is about to pass by.***" And a great wind tore apart the mountain, but the Lord was not in that wind. There was an earthquake and the earthquake rattled the earth's foundations, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. Then a fire tore up one side of the mountain and down the other, but the LORD was not in that fire.

And then.

And then there came a whisper. And Elijah wrapped his cloak around his face and came of the cave, because He knew the LORD was in the whisper.

We often want the LORD to show Himself in power, the equivalent of the wind, the earthquake, the fire. We want God to be like the storm and fix things and change things. And make everything alright in a massive and dramatic fashion. But the

LORD demonstrates something to Elijah that is absolutely critical for us to understand; the LORD's power of a solution, but in but the power of a promise.

Sometimes in your life, most times in your life, the word of God is all that you will have. But it is all that you will need. When you are at your lowest when you want to disappear it is then that God comes to you in a whisper, but in that whisper, you will find a promise.

The dysfunction in the world may scream that no one is in charge, God's word whispers that He has all of history under His control.

Your conscience may snarl dirty and unforgiveable. God's word whispers that, for Jesus' sake, you are forgiven. The voice in your head may whimper, I can't go on, God's word whispers that His strength is sufficient. And when you come forward to take the Lord's Supper, it the whisper of the Gospel that tells you that your sins are now no longer yours.

Yes the LORD whispered to Elijah, He whispers to you. Words of promise and words of peace. Listen carefully.

And afterward the whisper? God instructs, ***“Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram and anoint Elisha...to succeed you as prophet.”*** In other words, Elijah you can't disappear. I have a plan and you are part of my plan. It is a big plan and even if you don't understand why something has happened, you can trust me. Now leave the cave.

God says to you I have a plan and you are part of my plan. It is a big plan and even if you don't understand why something has happened, you can trust me. Now leave the cave.

Go back into a world that is not perfect but it's the world that God has placed you in. Leave the cave and go back into a family that may not be perfect but it is the family that God has placed you it. You go back because it is not time for you to disappear. It is not time for you to quit. It is not time for you to go to heaven. One day? Yes, of course. So Christian, we do what believers have always done and pray for God's strength: