

FIRST KINGS 19:9B-18

Interactive Reading

Reader 1: Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He answered:

Reader 2: “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

Reader 1: He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.”

Now there was a great wind [*class begins making woo-oooo wind noises*],

so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind [*wind noises STOP*];

and after the wind an earthquake [*class begins stomping their feet*], but the LORD was not in the earthquake [*stomping STOPS*];

and after the earthquake a fire [*class crinkles paper*], but the LORD was not in the fire [*crinkling paper STOPS*];

and after the fire a sound of sheer silence [*class is silent...allow silence to linger*].

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” He answered:

Reader 2: “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.”

Reader 1: Then the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL READINGS

Excerpts from Sandra Cronk's *Dark Night Journey: Inward Re-patterning Toward a Life Centered in God* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications) 1993.

Description of the dark night of the soul

“One of the most powerful pathways in the journey to God is the time of stripping and emptiness called by many “the dark night.” The name is apt. It describes the situation of those who have had a growing sense of relationship with God and are suddenly bereft of an experience of God’s presence, direction, and consolation. Accompanying the loss of the experience of God is the unexpected opaqueness of all those areas of our lives through which God’s light used to shine, giving meaning and purpose.” (p. 1)

Being Re-patterned by God

“Those who have traveled in the dark night have both very daring and, at the same time, very practical advice to give to new journeyers. ‘Stay in the darkness and emptiness. Do not flee from the nothingness or try to fill up that hollow place with your own attempts to create new finite pillars on which to build your life.’ The prescription is daring because it flies in the face of our instinct, as journeyers, to clutch at any straw in this dreadful time. It also contradicts the model for helpers of those in pain. Helpers wish to rescue, to fix all problems, and to make sure everything comes out all right. But rescuing is not in order here. God is to be found in the darkness, not away from it. Moreover, rescuing is not possible anyway. There are no more straws to clutch; there are no solutions to our dilemma; thus, the advice to stay in the emptiness is purely practical. There is no other choice. There is no way to prop ourselves up unless we are willing to settle for what we know are weak supports which will crack when we try to place any weight on them.

By facing the darkness, we confront that empty place inside each of us. That place marks the end or limit of all the finite things in creation, including the limits of ourself. Our strivings after meaning and purpose—indeed, after God—have brought us to the end of ourselves and our own ability to encompass God. As we stand at the edge of these limits, we face nothing, or so it seems. But, paradoxically, just at this point when we face nothing rather than ourselves or any other elements of creation, we may come to know our creator. In that empty place we can at last now that which transcends ourselves...

We begin to recognize a deeper conversion or turning to God which takes place in the dark night. A profound re-patterning begins in us. The re-patterning can happen because the old structure of our lives has been broken up. All those good but creaturely pillars will no longer serve as the center of our lives. Now that they are taken away, a new center can emerge. That new center is God. This new center is not simply an intellectually or emotionally based faith in God. The dark night journey has re-shaped our activity patterns, our value system, and our whole being so that God is the functional center of our living.” (pp. 45–46)

SILENT MEDITATION GUIDE

As you settle into the silence, offer a short prayer:
“God, draw near to me in this quiet space.”

Close your eyes if it helps you to enter the silence. Pay attention to your breath. When your mind becomes distracted, draw your attention back to your breath. After simply breathing and paying attention for several minutes, you can hold the following questions (if helpful):

Who are you, God?

Who are you inviting me to be?

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