

This week we hear another story of Call – that of Elijah to a different form of faith and experience of God. It might even be a sort of reformation. Solomon, as we saw last week, raises the taxes to fund the Temple and pay for his the luxuries and grandeur of his court life-style. He is succeeded by his son, Rehoboam (the 4th king of Israel). A tea party movement begins at his coronation.. The people ask him to reduce the heavy taxes imposed by his father Solomon. Upon counsel, he refuses, instead raising the taxes further to crush the movement. Instead the ten northern Kingdoms (or tribes) revolt, and form their own country called Israel (or the Northern Kingdom). Rehoboam is left with only the two southern kingdoms: Judah.

Ahab is the 7th king to rule Israel (around 850 BC). History indicates that he was a great king, winning many battles and expanding the kingdom. Yet the Biblical narrative presents him as the most evil, following foreign gods, forsaking the ways of Israel, persecuting the priests and prophets of his people. His foreign-born wife, Jezebel, is often credited with have much idolatrous sway and power over him and the people inciting them to worship the storm god Ba'al and his consort the fertility goddess Asherah. Such worship supposedly involved ritual poles and even child sacrifice.

Our story picks up after Elijah, the great prophet of that day, has done a miraculous thing, overcoming 450 priests of Ba'al and 450 of Asherah in a sort of prophetic duel (1 Kings 12. As a result of his public shaming of the kings priests, Elijah is sentenced to death, with a price on his head. He must flee, and hide to preserve his life. After having served faithfully, refusing to forsake the LORD he is at both his wits' and body's end as we encounter him in today's passage.

Horeb : Elijah has come to the same mountain where Yahweh was revealed in the burning bush to Moses (Exodus 3:1). More of the story of the Exodus is intertwined with today's story as Elijah, like the wandering Israelites, complains against God's provision and plan, pleading for death: an end to his misery (See verse 4). It echoes the scriptures of Exodus 16:2-3

"2 The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

And Numbers 14:2 (next page)

SCRIPTURES FOR

SUNDAY 11.5.2017

1 Kings 19:1-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

1 Kings 19:1-18

¹ Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." ³ Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. ⁷ The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, "Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you." ⁸ He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to **Horeb** the mount of God. ⁹ At that place he came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He answered, "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."

¹¹ 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, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; ¹² and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. ¹³ 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?" ¹⁴ He answered, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God

² And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!"

1 Corinthians is the pastoral letter written by the Apostle Paul to the church in ancient Corinth (Greece). Corinth was a well-known metropolis of the ancient Roman Empire, filled with wealth, a vast multi-cultural presence, including many religions. It might not have been that different than the diversity of our own Bay Area.

The letter of pastoral advice addresses the challenges that this emerging church faces with a diverse group of congregants, spanning many cultures, economic classes, social status, and religious backgrounds. Many of their challenges came from division that was born of their diversity. Paul responds to several concrete problems with his advice, and near the end of his letter concludes with the soaring rhetoric of chapters 12 and 13, in which he invites the believers to a different, deeper unity, a strength that only Jesus can give for the journey of faith.

Scientifically we now know that all living systems are made up of divergent parts. The human body reflects this truth that the whole is more than the sum of the parts. It can be used as an example of how the divergent and parts and different systems of the body come together and make a convergent whole. This is in large part way Paul is trying to say to the church or Corinth about the Church in general, in a specific location and as a living organism.

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

- What shimmers for you in these passages?
- What word, phrase or image touches your life today?
- How have you experienced the presence of God in God's absence?
- How do you experience the Church as the body of Christ? How have you experienced that whole as greater than the sum of its parts here with CAPC Oakland?
- When have you needed strength for the journey of life and faith like Elijah in the cave? How has God provided? Talk with God about how you need strength today; about how we as a continuing church in our 100th year need strength?

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." ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." ²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.