

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 12

For 15 October 2017

Dear Friends

I have other friends. I usually call them “Old Friends”. That’s because they are old. I’m referring to books that have travelled as my companions down through the years. It’s not the books themselves. It’s what is inside. And the emphasis is on the stories—their stories. So often they touch my life in the here and now.

Today meet one of these. It’s the OT prophet Elijah. Did I say old? He lived in about 1500 BC. I’m taking an event in his life so I jump in midway through it. Elijah is sitting in the desert, alone and lonely. He had sent his servant back home from the edge of the desert. Some journeys can only be done on our own. He’s sitting under a broom bush. His mind is going in circles—“Lord I have had enough. Take away my life. I am no better than my ancestors.” (1 Kings 19:1-8) Some of you may not know all this. I’ll fill in a wee bit. Elijah was afraid. Jezebel the Queen in Israel had her prophets. They had a competition to see whose God was the greatest. Elijah’s (Israel’s God) won hands-down. Jezebel was furious because Elijah’s group slaughtered the other group. She said Elijah would be dead in 24 hours time. Hence he fled. We usually choose either ‘flight’ or ‘fight’. See how this story can quickly turn into the subject of depression. I’m not going there. The term “depression” wasn’t known until the 20th century. But it’s interesting the term—depression = pushed down = weighted down, under pressure—cramped, shrunken. Elijah had just achieved a mighty victory. But as often happens after we finish a project, reach a goal, win the medal, get the jackpot, or a smaller victory, then the glory and joy slip away and we doubt and feel flat. Most people have had some such experience—big or small. I think of Lucy in the Peanuts cartoons. Today Lucy is out of sorts, and complains about the difficulty of life. Charlie Brown listens and then says—“Lucy, life is full of ups and downs.” Lucy’s reply is clear and strong: “I WANT ONLY UPS UPS UPS”

The characters of Peanuts are more of my “old friends”. Elijah was alone and lonely. Part of his loneliness is that he feels the people have not changed back from the religion of the Queen and even his prophets have fallen away from him. He is alone. His words are: “I am the only one left and they want to kill me.” So what does he do? He lay down under the bush, turned his ‘face to the wall’ and slept. Loneliness is more common than we imagine. Not only the loners on the edge of society—but also the elite and comfortably off, lots of people in their groups and 100’s on their Facebook and other electronic gadgets. Very recently I read of a Professor at Harvard with his class discussing the merits and demerits of mass media. A student broke in and said the consequence for me is “I feel lonely”. The Prof asked if anyone else felt lonely. To his surprise All (except for 2 students) put up their hands. So how does Elijah come out of this wish to die? How do we move into a new attitude, begin to regain the confidence to get going again? That’s for the next page.

Sincerely - Lester

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 16 October:	98	Rom 1:1-7	Luke 11:29-32
Tuesday 17 October:	19:1-4	Rom 1:16-25	Luke 11:37-41
Wednesday 18 October:	147:1-7	Acts 16:6-12a	Luke 10:1-9
Thursday 19 October:	130	Rom 3:21-30	Luke 11:47-end
Friday 20 October:	32	Rom 4:1-8	Luke 12:1-7
Saturday 21 October:	105:6-10, 41-44	Rom 4:13,16-18	Luke 12:8-12

Sunday 22 October Pentecost 20

Ps 99; Ex 33:12-23:1-14; 1 Thes 1:1-10; Matt 22:15-22

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 23 October:	119:65-72	Acts 15:12-22a	Matt 13:53-58
Tuesday 24 October:	40:7-12	Rom 5:12,15,17-end	Luke 12:35-38
Wednesday 25 October:	124	Rom 6:12-18	Luke 12:39-48
Thursday 26 October:	1	Rom 6:19-end	Luke 12:49-53
Friday 27 October:	119:33-40	Rom 7:18-end	Luke 12:54-end
Saturday 28 October:	119:89-96	Isa 28:14-16	John 15:17-end

Sunday 29 October Pentecost 21

Ps 90:1-6,13-17; Deut 34:1-12; 1 Thes 2:1-8; Matt 22:34-46

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 30 October:	68:1-6,19	Rom 8:12-17	Luke 13:10-17
Tuesday 31 October:	126	Rom 8:18-25	Luke 13:18-21
Wednesday 1 November:	13	Rom 8:26-30	Luke 13:22-30
Thursday 2 November:	23	Rom 5:5-11	John 5:19-25
Friday 3 November:	147:13-end	Rom 9:1-5	Luke 14:1-6
Saturday 4 November:	94:14-19	Rom 11:1-2,11-12, 25-29	Luke 14:1,7-11

Sunday 5 November Pentecost 22

Ps 107:1-7,33-37; Josh 3:7-17; 1 Thes 2:9-13; Matt 23:1-12

WHERE TO NOW?

They say the longest journey starts with the first step. True. However behind that step there lies—rest, energy, intention and motivation.

Elijah gradually has enough of these to move—sleep, hot food, intention to find out what is next—not without a little lapse back to sleep. He woke to the smell of cooking food. He sensed he was being nourished for a long tough journey. It was a 40 day trip which was the Hebrews way of saying—“a long time”. His direction was towards Mt Horeb, God’s mountain.

The inner voice asked “Why are you here?” Elijah went through his list of things that made him despair—and a little bit of self pity. It’s a healthy practice to ask that question of ourselves. Now for Elijah, he’s standing on the mountain in front of a cave. 1st there was a mighty wind. 2nd a mighty earthquake, 3rd a great fire. God was not in these. Neither the wind, earthquake or fire. That’s surprising. But people are deaf to this. The right message was in it for Elijah. There’s a world of difference between the frequent battering we get within nature, and the joy and calm of inner stillness.

(1) Wind (2) Earthquake (3) Fire— our world a good example:

- Hurricane—Level 5
 - Earthquakes—Mexico, Italy
 - Fire—Ash moved wider by the wind—Volcanoes—Vanuatu.
- (These are creative forces of the universe: Air, Sea and Land.)

Elijah got behind the awe-inspiring, overwhelming and at times terrifying. These forces are destructive—the shudder of the earth; the wind; and the explosion of a mountain. They are also creative. This is the evolution that is moving on, as it has since the great Bang—more than 5 billion years!

How might Elijah “catch” the message? Again the question came to him “why are you here?” This is a good question to ask ourselves. What message might he have liked? — or desperately needed. We can’t know. It is a matter of importance to note the need for stillness. As the poet (T S Eliot) puts it—“To find the still point in a turning world.”

To sense that we need this movement to go on in our lives. To get past thinking there isn’t anything beyond and deep within us—beyond is just pure space, and we are helpless in so many ways. Look at the way we humans are causing more problems. We are soiling our own nest.

Life goes on—evolution proceeds.

And Elijah? With the illusions in his head flushed out, he continued his journey.

BEHIND THE STILLNESS

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives thy service find;
In deeper reverence, praise.

With that deep hush subduing all
Our words and works that drown
The tender whisper of thy call,
As noiseless let thy blessing fall
As fell thy manna down.

An idea

Take these verses one at a time -
Be still with it.
What rings a bell for you?

Read each one 4 x before reflecting
on it.

Take the rest of the week doing one
verse each day.

What are the images and words that
have special meaning?

Use it last thing at night—and sink
into the space behind the stillness,
as you sink into sleep.

- from Eckhart Tolle

Is stillness just the absence of
noise and content?

No, it is intelligence itself—the
underlying conscious out of
which every form is born.
And how could that be
separate from who you are?

Look at a tree, a flower, a
plant. How still they are.
How deeply rooted in being.
Allow nature to teach you
stillness.

Stillness is the essence of all
galaxies and blades of grass;
all trees, birds, fish and all
other forms.

Stillness is the only thing in
this world that has no form.
But then, it is not really a thing!

Let stillness direct your words
and actions.

Be still—so you can know.