

A Consequential Calling
1 Kings: 19:9-15
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Dr. Rev. Nicholas Pearce
First Presbyterian Church
Lake Forest, Illinois

Good morning everyone. God bless your hearts. What a joy it is for me to stand behind this sacred desk and spend these next few weeks with you as your theologian in residence, discussing what it means to answer the call of God. I am grateful to Reverend Dolan and to Reverend Finley for their leadership and their hospitality. I'm grateful to the Lord for each of you, and I would invite you to join me in the Word of God in the Book of 1 Kings, chapter number 19. It is printed in your bulletin. For the sake of time I will read just three verses. I will begin reading in verse number 13 of 1 Kings chapter 19. Hear the Word of the Lord: "And it was so when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entering in of the cave. And behold there came a voice unto him and said, 'What doest thou here, Elijah?' He said, 'I've been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine alters and slain thine prophets with the sword, and I – even I – only am left and they seek my life to take it away.' And the Lord said unto him, 'Go return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus; and when thou comest anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.'" This is the Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Let's Pray. God we thank you for your Word. It's a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway. Speak to us now, send a clear word, give us hearts to hear and hands that are ready to do. Through Christ the Lord. Amen.

The Lord has lead me this morning to share with you all from the subject *a consequential calling*. In the twenty-first century the church has taken on the form more of a country club than an army. But I assure you, brothers and sisters, that the Church of Jesus Christ purchased by his own blood was not for

our comfort or convenience. Jesus's blood was shed at Calvary that we might have life; that we might be in relationship with him and that we might join together with that great body of blood bought believers to form a great army. And every follower of Jesus Christ is called to be in that army. We're called to be in the world but not of the world. We are called to share the good news that Jesus saves. Now there is a quote that has been circulating among churches for the last few decades that's of dubious origin that says that we should preach the gospel at all times and use words if necessary. And I must humbly disagree.

I understand the point of that quote – the notion that our works often speak louder than our words. But words matter too. In fact, it is impossible to preach the gospel without words. And for those of us who have grown comfortable living in the world as secret agents for the Lord Jesus may I invite you to begin using your words. The gospel requires words! Romans 10 tells us 'how will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in whom they have not heard? How will they hear without a preacher?' Now this word preacher here in the Greek is not about clergy, it's about proclaimers, heralds, announcers of good news. And we want to relegate the proclamation of the gospel to the professional preacher when God has entrusted this great message to each and every one of us. We live in times when the gospel is unpopular. Those who dare to believe it and live it whole heartedly often face persecution.

But Jesus said Matthew chapter 5 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice! And be exceeding glad for great is your reward in heaven for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.' In our text we find one of those prophets a man named Elijah. An ordinary man from the rough and rugged hills of Gilead where most people subsisted by keeping

flocks of sheep. Gilead was not a place of wealth and affluence. He grew up on the wrong side of the tracks; the rough side of the mountain. He wasn't on Israel's Who's Who list, but he had a heart for God. Now I need to pause here and suggest to us that it doesn't matter who you are or where you're from or where you've been. I've got good news that you are eligible to partner with God in the work of the kingdom.

Dr. King said "You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to have the ability to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity or the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. The soul generated by love."

Elijah lived in a time of great spiritual darkness and moral degradation in a land where people declared that God was dead, and that Baal their idol God lived and reigned supreme. Elijah lived in a land where A.W. Pink says "every light had been extinguished and every voice of divine testimony was hushed and it looked as though Satan had indeed obtained complete mastery of the situation." Elijah's name meant 'My God is Yahweh' and so his very presence amidst this dark and idolatrous culture testified to the fact that the true and living God is yet alive and well. His very presence was a radical act of pledging allegiance to the true and living God. I believe we need some modern day Elijahs. Some people who are willingly to publicly declare 'I pledge allegiance to my God before I pledge allegiance to an idol that this culture has created. Some things you just have to take and speak the truth in love.

In 1Kings chapter 18 Elijah stands on Mt. Carmel confronting the prophets of Baal by building an alter for the Lord. And I'm sure they'll tell the kids in Sunday school that fire fell from heaven and prove that no matter what the world says God still answers prayer. And when word got back to Ahab and

Jezebel of what Elijah had done on that mountain that day Jezebel said to Elijah, “You’re going to be dead in 24 hours.” Can you handle that? When you’re called by God to do things of consequence for the Lord – there may be consequences. But the alternative is for you to live a life that is spiritually inconsequential.

Elijah got scared. He ran for his life. He didn’t preach; he didn’t prophesize; he abandoned his calling. He abandoned his post and ran away to a cave – no hope left; no fight left but he still called by God. Isn’t good to know that even in the caves of life that there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God? Isn’t it good to know that even in the caves of life that God’s grace is still sufficient. It’s good to know that even in life’s caves that the Lord is good and his mercy endures forever. And in that cave God spoke to Elijah. He said, “Elijah, what are you doing here?” Sometimes God asks us questions but God’s not asking questions looking for information because he is omniscient. God asks questions to give us an opportunity to receive revelation. Elijah said, “God it’s rough out there. I did my part for you on the mountain but Jezebel wants to kill me. There are a lot of people out there who don’t believe you’re God – even your people! Your chosen people are acting like you’re not God.” God said to Elijah, “Elijah, I know the situation. I’ve called you for such a time as this. I’ve called you, I’ve chosen you, I’ve empowered you – so get up out of this cave! This is not where you belong.”

If there is somebody under the sound of my voice this morning whom God has called and you’re sitting in your cave; you’re looking out at the world and saying ‘God it’s too hard to represent you; God it’s too hard to be a voice for you in this dark and forsaken world!’ And the Word of the Lord to you this morning is *get up*. Get up! Stand up for Jesus in your home. Stand up for Jesus in your church. Stand up for Jesus in your workplace. Stand up at the board room table or at the lunch table. Stand up for Jesus in your community. Stand up for Jesus in this nation. How dare we do anything less when we consider

the God man Christ Jesus who was despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows acquainted with grief.

How dare we do anything less when we consider the fact that Jesus was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our inequities. How dare we do less when Jesus who knew no sin became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God. How dare we do less when he was crucified on a thieves cross. When he was buried in Joseph's borrowed tomb – but just like God said to Elijah, God said to Jesus on the third day morning, “Get up! It's time to go! You've got a work to do!” And because Jesus rose with all power in his hand, you and I have the power to get up to.