

Sermon Notes

**St Mark's Anglican Church
South Hurstville**

**Pentecost 4
24 June 2007**

**Preacher
The Reverend David Cohen
Visiting celebrant and preacher**

Readings: 1 Kings 19.1-4,8-15a; Psalm 42.1-7; Galatians 3.10-14, 23-29; Luke 8.26-39

How faint the whisper ...

The context of the Old Testament reading – Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:21): *Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."*

The wonderful tragic-comedy followed with the 450 prophets of Baal and Elijah, with two bulls – they danced, shouted, were taunted by Elijah, cut themselves in a frantic frenzy – then Elijah built an altar, and had the people douse it in water – three times – and the fire fell – all the people fell prostrate and cried: *"The Lord – He is God!"*

Ahab and Jezebel plot together to do Elijah in – he ran for his life into the desert – in deep depression prayed that he might die – he slept; then ate and drank, fed miraculously – travelled 40 days to Mt Horeb –

1 Kings 19.9: *Then the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here Elijah?"*

Good question for us: "What are you doing here?" – What is your personal mission statement? What is the real purpose of living?

Verse 10: *"I have been zealous...the Israelites have rejected your covenant...they are trying to kill me... Even the great prophet Elijah knew what it was to fail.*

Verse 11: *The Lord said: Go...stand...in the presence of the Lord...for He is about to pass by... We need to be in the presence of the Lord to hear Him – an intimate relationship with Him – the sacraments, prayer, Bible study, waiting on Him (such as Chris Albany's retreat this weekend for Woy Woy parish at Kincumber).*

Then a great and powerful wind...an earthquake...a fire...and after the fire came a gentle whisper (a still small voice)...we are constantly reminded of the power of nature, and by deduction, the power of the Creator...wind, earthquake, fire all appropriate symbols of God's nature – holiness, judgment, sovereignty, destruction...but also gentle, winsome, personal, intimate...a whisper...

So what? What does all this mean for us?

1. Life can be tough, unproductive and unfair, even to obedient disciples like Elijah!
2. God communicates in unexpected ways – often undramatic ones! – such as a whisper! – Job 26:14: *How faint the whisper we hear of him...* (book title!)
3. He was preparing Elijah for some important tasks:
 - To anoint Hazael king over Aram;
 - To anoint Jehu king over Israel
 - To anoint Elisha as his successor as prophet – transition; generational change...

We never know what effect our obedience might have – small actions have changed the course of history...what might yours be this week? Even for one person!

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