

What Are You Doing Here?

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[0 : 00] Let me extend a very warm welcome to you this evening. Thank you for joining us in this service of worship, and I trust that our time together will be blessed as we seek God's guidance as we come to worship Him and come to give our minds for some time to the teaching of His Word.

We're going to begin by singing to God's praise in Psalm 96 from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 96 and verses 9 to 12. Psalm 97 and verses 10 to 12.

Psalm 97 and verses 10 to 12. Then woods and every tree shall sing with gladness and with mirth before the Lord. Because He comes to judge the earth, comes He. He'll judge the world with righteousness, the people faithfully.

We'll sing to Tuneershire. We'll sing these verses to the end of the psalm from verse 9. In beauty of His holiness. O do the Lord adore. In beauty of His holiness.

O do the Lord adore. Likewise let all the earth throughout tremble His face before.

[1 : 52] Among the heathens, say God reigns. The world shall steadfastly be fixed from moving.

He shall judge the people righteously. Let hence be glad before the Lord.

Let the earth rejoice. Let the earth rejoice. Let seas and all that is wedding cry out and make a noise.

Let fields rejoice. Let fields rejoice. Let fields rejoice. And everything that springeth off the earth. Then woods and every tree shall sing with gladness and with mirth.

[3 : 21] Before the Lord. Before the Lord. Before the Lord. Before the Lord. Because He comes to judge me.

As comes He. He'll judge the world with righteousness. The people faithfully.

Now let's read and hear God's word from the first book of Kings. Chapter 19. 1 Kings chapter 19.

We're going to read verses 1 to 15. 1 Kings 19 from the beginning. Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done.

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 as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow. Then he was afraid and rose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah and left his servant there.

[4 : 38] But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, It is enough. Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my father's.

2 Kings 19. And he lay down and slept under a boom tree. 3 Kings 20. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, Arise and eat. 4 Kings 20. And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water.

5 Kings 20. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 5 Kings 21. And the angel of the Lord came a second time and touched him and said, Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.

6 Kings 21. And he arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. 7 Then he came to a cave and lodged in it.

8 And behold, the word of the Lord came to him and he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? 9 He said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, 9 thrown down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.

[5 : 55] 9 And he said, Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord. 10 And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord.

10 But the Lord was not in the wind. 11 And after the wind, an earthquake. 11 But the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake, a fire. 12 But the Lord was not in the fire.

13 And after the fire, the sound of a low whisper. 14 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

15 And behold, there came a voice to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? 15 He said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. 16 For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword.

17 And I, even I only, am left. 17 And they seek my life to take it away. 18 And the Lord said to him, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

[7 : 02] 18 And we pray God will bless that reading of his word to us. 18 Now let's engage in prayer. 19 Let's call upon the Lord together in prayer. 19 Our gracious God, we thank you tonight that we have this privilege of coming before you.

19 We ask, O Lord, that you would enable us to glorify you and to enjoy you. 19 We know that this is why you created us. 19 That we might give glory to you as our God and creator.

19 And that we might also enjoy you in living fellowship. 19 We bless you, O Lord, that coming to glorify you is not in any way at enmity with enjoying you.

19 We pray that through your Holy Spirit, O Lord, we might be led tonight to know of that enjoyment in our hearts. 19 An enjoyment that is more than a mere emotion, but that includes that sense of satisfaction and confidence in the Lord our God.

19 We ask, O Lord, that you would bless us each one, though separate from each other. 19 We ask for the help of your Spirit, Lord, to glorify and enjoy you.

[8 : 16] 19 We are conscious that it is through that Spirit that we are joined together spiritually as one people. 19 We pray, O Lord, that your Spirit will tonight anew take the things of Christ and show them unto us.

19 We pray, O Lord, that you would manifest yourself to us so that we may understand you even more than we have thus far. 19 We pray, O Lord, that we may have your word opened up for us through the power of your Spirit, through the ability your Spirit gives, 19 So that we may speak and listen in such a way as would also glorify you and enjoy you in that.

19 We bless you that as we have been singing in your praise, you are a God who is worthy to be praised, the only one who is worthy of worship. 19 We bless you that you are set above the work of your hands.

19 We thank you that all the things that have taken place in the history of the world have happened through your direction, under your sovereignty, within your control.

19 And we know, O Lord, that the same is true of our day also, and of our lives within this world. 19 We thank you tonight for the assurance and the confidence that this brings us.

[9 : 38] 19 We know, Lord, that your awesomeness causes us to fear you, to tremble before you, to realise in awe your majesty to some extent.

19 We know that many examples in your word have come in the same way to fall down before you, to adore you, and to realise and confess that you are a great God and worthy to be praised.

19 We thank you for all that makes you great. 19 We thank you for all that makes you great. 19 For the magnificent attributes that you describe for us in your word, even though we know we understand so little of them.

19 Of your power and your holiness, of your justice, your righteousness, and all that makes you to be God. 19 We thank you for all that, Lord, that we have the privilege of speaking with you, of approaching you through that mediator that you have provided for us, the Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.

19 We give thanks, O Lord, that he is so wonderfully and fully equipped to be our mediator. 19 We thank you for all that, Lord, that he is so incredibly and very important.

[10 : 59] 19 We thank you for all the faculties of humanity and of Godness, that enables sin to bridge that great gulf that our sin caused between us and God. 19 We thank you that, having done so through his incarnation and through his death and resurrection and ascension to glory, 19 That he is now ministering through his Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to his people, both here and in heaven too.

Lord, help us, we pray tonight, to cast ourselves before you as those who have no strength of our own to deal with the things of magnitude that we find in our lives and in our world.

We pray for the world in which we are set. We know, Lord, that your providence is the providence that provides all that happens in the world, from the least thing to the greatest virus.

We pray that we may hear your voice speaking to us through these things. You are addressing us, you are calling us to give attention to your works, to realise, O Lord, that these things don't happen by chance or without reason or purpose.

Whatever we know of your own purpose and the end that you have in view, we know that you are addressing us as sinners, as people who need to come in repentance.

[12:17] And to confess before you that we are worthy of worse than this. Yet we give thanks, O Lord, that worse has not come upon us.

We ask for your presence with your people throughout this time. We ask for your power and for your intervention to give us deliverance.

We ask, Lord, for our leaders, not only in our own country, but throughout the world. We pray especially, Lord, for our leaders in this nation. And we pray that as we seek your guidance for them, we pray above everything else that they may know you as their God.

That they may come, Lord, to turn to you. That you would open up their hearts to receive you. And to acknowledge that you are God and that they need you. Lord, we pray that this would be true of them.

Even through this time of crisis that they may realize that it is only God himself who is able to give true deliverance and freedom and satisfaction to us.

[13:22] And who alone has the power to deal with world events in a way that would direct them to your glory and to our good. We commend them to you. And we pray that you would hear all those who are praying for them during this time.

We ask, too, that you bless those who are directly involved in dealing with this virus and many other matters which affect our health mentally and physically.

We give thanks, Lord, for the provision that you make for us in all of these areas of life. And we pray for those who have to deal with death and with the management of the bereaved.

We ask, O Lord, that you would bless them and help them to deal with this in these critical times.

And we ask that you would hear us as we call upon you in prayer to give us more of that true sense of the worth of your word.

And how much it is a sufficient word for us in every time of need. Receive us, Lord, we pray now. Continue with us and bless us through this service.

[14:27] And pardon our many sins for Jesus' sake. Amen. Now for the children, just to take a few minutes to come to our next Bible animal.

And the next Bible animal tonight we're dealing with is the lamb. References to a lamb appear in the Bible more than a hundred times. So the lamb is a very common animal in the teaching of the Bible. And if we go back to Exodus chapter 12, we'll find that the lamb was very much a part of what Israel were aware of and had to deal with as they prepared to leave Egypt.

Leaving the cruelty of the slavery that they had in Egypt, which is really a picture for us of how we are under the slavery and the power of sin and need the Lord to deliver us.

And you remember there that the lamb, it's a difficult thing to think about because we think of lambs as really nice cuddly things. And they are, of course. But the Lord required that they would kill what came to be the Passover lamb.

[15:32] And that the blood of that lamb would be put on the doorposts and on the lintels of the door. So that it would be proof for the people of Israel that the Lord was not going to touch them with death the way he was in the houses of the Egyptians.

And that's a picture for us, not only of how we come to be under the tyranny of sin and how we are held in imprisonment in sin, slavery to sin.

God rescues us from that through the death of Jesus. That's why John the Baptist, the Gospel of John, John the Baptist in chapter 1 and verse 29 spoke about Jesus.

And he said, behold, the lamb of God. He was pointing out Jesus as the lamb of God. The sacrifice that God had provided and that would, through his death, rescue all who trust in him from their sins. In other words, the lamb, as 1 Peter reminds us, the lamb through which we are redeemed. Jesus is our redeemer. A redeemer means somebody who brings us back to God and does so by paying the price of sin, which is death.

[16:49] The death which we deserved, he died. That's why we are redeemed. We're bought back to God by the death of Jesus. 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 19 says, Remember that you are not redeemed by ordinary corruptible things like silver, like gold, like money, but by the precious blood

of Christ.

A lamb without blemish, without spot. A perfect lamb in sacrifice to God. And that means that God gave Jesus instead of us.

Instead of us having to die, the Son of God came to take our place. And it's through that that we have redemption, salvation, all the other big words that are used to describe how God has rescued us from sin, from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin, from the imprisonment in which we are in sin.

And all of that is due to God's love. More than anything else, God's love is what has provided for us this lamb that is Jesus. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Whenever you see a lamb or read about a lamb, think about Jesus. Think about the lamb of God. Think why he died. Why God put him in our place.

[18 : 30] So that we might live. And that we might have eternal life. Let's now say the Lord's Prayer together. And as we're saying it, just think about the words that we're using in the Lord's Prayer because it is a prayer and we want to use it as a prayer.

Whenever we're praying to God, we have to think about the words that we're using, even if we're very familiar with them, just so that we can actually be sure that we're saying this to God as a prayer.

Let's say it together. Amen.

We're going to come now to look at a question from the passage we read in 1 Kings chapter 19. As you know, we've been looking at a number of questions in the Bible that have come from God to various people.

And we've been looking at these because this is God's Word as questions that come to ourselves and address ourselves in our relationship with God and with the world in which we live.

[19 : 57] And the question we have in this passage is actually asked twice by God. In verse 9, first of all, where you find that Elijah, when he came to the cave, he lodged in it and behold, the word of the Lord came to him and he said, What are you doing here, Elijah?

And then the same question was asked in verse 13. There came a voice to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? One of the great features of the Bible is that it does not edit out some of the failures even of the best people of God.

Elijah was one of the best people of God, one of the best servants that God sent with his Word to people in this life. David was the same. Peter was the same.

But the Bible doesn't give us the kind of biography. It's not a biography anyway. But when it tells us about their life and describes something, it doesn't hold back from telling us their faults.

It doesn't fail to show us that they had lapses, that they had times when they weren't as they should have been in their relationship with God. The Bible tells us sometimes they were despondent, disillusioned, that although they achieved great things by God's power and grace, there were times when they were filled with a sense of failure, a sense of inadequacy, a sense of not really being cut out for the job and not being right for it and not really willing to go any further with it.

[21 : 32] And that's something of what you see in Elijah because when you come from chapter 18, you have that great contest on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal and the wonderful demonstration of God coming down in fire and devouring the sacrifice.

Then you're quickly into chapter 19 and in a very short space of time, you have Elijah running for his life. And the questions that come to him in that context, the question is really the same question, although it's there twice as we've seen, the questioning is part of God's treatment of him.

God never leaves his servants, God never leaves his people without actually coming into the situation with them and dealing with them exactly the right way that will help them to overcome whatever difficulty they have, even if that may take a long time.

So first of all, here's a question that's addressing Elijah as a runaway. A question addressing a runaway.

And I'm going to leave it like that without confining it to Elijah because it's a question that always addresses ourselves whenever we've, to some extent, at least turned away from our duty, our responsibility, and turned to some extent away from God and wandered away from God, for whatever reason that may have been.

[22 : 57] This question is addressed to us, what are you doing here? And even if we haven't run away from God, if we haven't turned away from him, if we haven't gone away into some sort of alternative to being obedient to God, even if we are tonight sure that we are within God's will and we are doing things as he wants us, we still have to analyse that.

And God will always want us to analyse that. So if we ask ourselves, what am I doing? What is the end? What is the purpose for this? Why am I in this situation?

The question, first of all, addressing a runaway. Here, at the beginning of the chapter, as we said, you move quickly from chapter 18. Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.

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 as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow. When he was afraid, he arose and ran for his life, came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and so on.

You read down through the verses, they will mention a few details later on. But here is Jezebel's message. Jezebel, of course, is really the boss. Although Elijah is the king, it's Jezebel that really pulls the strings.

[24 : 17] She's the one that really makes up the policies, pretty much. And she's a formidable woman, a formidable person to actually take on, although Elijah has not been afraid to do that and will not be afraid afterwards.

But he runs away. He turns away from the threat that has been sent by Jezebel and he goes into the wilderness and he sits down under a juniper. You know, you might be saying, but surely that really might have been just to preserve his life.

It wouldn't be wrong for him, surely, to go and preserve his life and be able to come back later on, perhaps take up the leadership again. Well, that's certainly something that would be right in the circumstances.

And there have been many times in the history of the church when dynamic, bold leaders such as John Knox or others like that have had to leave the country when times of tyranny and persecution happened, such as under the reign of Mary Tudor.

Well, they had to go to the continent or some went off later to America to escape the persecutions. They weren't actually afraid of standing up to the persecution, but they wanted to start an alternative or in John Knox's case, to wait until it was right to come back.

[25 : 28] But that's not how it was with Elijah. And we can see that from the language that's actually used in the passage. We read, He was afraid, and he rose and ran for his life.

Well, that could just simply be, as we say, that he was just wanting to preserve his life so that he could come back. But then you see, he went a day's journey in the wilderness, sat down under a broom tree, and he asked the Lord that he might die, saying, It's enough.

Or you might say, I've had enough. It's been enough. Now, Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my father. You can see from that, he's not just running away so as to come back some other time.

He's exhausted. He's disillusioned. He's filled with a sense of failure. He's thinking, What is the point? Nothing's really happened. Nothing's really changed.

There's been no revival. There's been no repentance. There's been no change of policy at the top from King Ahab, from Jezebel. It's just as it was. What was Carmel all about?

[26 : 33] Despite the fact that God manifested his power, here is now Elijah's response to the threat to take away his life. And because he's exhausted, because he's disillusioned, because he's filled now with a sense of failure, he runs into the wilderness.

And you wouldn't want to criticize him for that. Because if you and I were in the same condition and the same mindset, that's what we would likely have done too.

You see, being a Christian does not immunize you from a sense of failure. It does not put you in a position where you're not going to feel that the world is on top of you, where you're not going to seek an escape from the present circumstances that cause you such pain, such trauma, such mental torment, or physical pain.

We're not immunized from that. We're not shielded from that so that it never comes near us. And of course, that's abundant throughout the Bible. And Elijah's response to the pain at this time is just to get away, just to escape from it.

And he's filled with this sense of being just useless, not being able to do anything further for God. Now, Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my father's.

[27 : 56] And that's where God's question comes in, as we feel, as you read down through the passage, we're obviously not dealing with all the details, but it is important to notice this, that God's question does not come to him until after God has given him some strengthening.

You see, he lies down, he takes rest. That's obviously something he needs. He's desperately tired. He needs rest. And the Lord knows that. So he lets him rest. Not only does he let him rest, but he provides food for him.

And he provides food for him through an angel, a cake, baked, sort of scone it would have been, on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate that, and he drank and lay down.

And the angel again came and said, arise and eat. And he went in the strength of that 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb. In other words, before God will actually get down to the business of interviewing Elijah and really trying to get him to face up to the situation, he cares for him.

He cares for him physically and mentally as well as spiritually. What a great God he is. What a wonderful God to have as your God, who doesn't actually come across all the things that are necessary in our lives, physically or mentally, in order to immediately get us to address the spiritual problem.

[29 : 18] He deals with every detail. He cares for every aspect of our being. He cares for your mind. He cares for your soul. He cares for your body. And that's what he's showing in dealing with Elijah as he does.

But when he comes to the cave that he lodges in, then the word of the Lord comes to him and says, what are you doing here, Elijah? And this is in line with what you find elsewhere in the Bible.

When God comes to actually meet with people in these sort of circumstances, very often his therapy is by way of questioning. And his questioning is not so as to just accuse them and make them feel bad, just make them feel guilty and be furthered in their disillusionment.

He's actually just dealing with this in a way that questions Elijah so as to bring him again to refocus, to bring him to really just consider what it is that's brought him to this wilderness and how it is that he's now in this situation.

He wants Elijah to examine his motives, to examine what's gone behind this, what's led to this. And you can get that when you emphasize the words that are in the question itself.

[30 : 33] What are you doing here, Elijah? Emphasizing the word what, you'll get God really saying, well, what? What's the purpose? What's the business you have here? What's your business in this cave?

And then you could emphasize the word what are you doing here? Is this where I've placed you for my service? What service can you do for me here?

Is this not different to where I would want you to be? What are you doing here? Would be the other one. What are you doing here? Are you not my prophet?

Have I not been to you everything you needed up to now to fulfill your role as a prophet and speaking to these people who have abandoned God and gone away? Well, here is God gently but yet firmly saying to Elijah, what are you doing here, Elijah?

God needs, God knows that Elijah needs not just the rest that he's just given him, but he needs now to think. He needs now to think through his situation and his relation to God and to God's call to be his servant.

[31 : 48] And we need that too in a tremendously busy world because the world of our day doesn't give you much time to rest, much time to just sit and reflect.

And perhaps one of the difficulties for some people, at least during this time of restrictions under the COVID situation, is that they have not really been used to resting in a way that reflects, in a way that meditates, in a way that just questions and analyzes their lives, especially for those who are not used to church or to gospel preaching, gospel teaching, or Christian teaching.

But friends, we have to make this time for ourselves. Remember Jesus in Mark chapter 6, verse 31, all of the crowd that was swelling around him and his disciples and just making so many demands on him and on them as well.

And Jesus said, go by yourselves to a desolate place for a while. Take some time out. Rest. And God knew that that's what Elijah needed too.

And here is his question to him now. What are you doing here, Elijah? Let me ask myself this question. Let me ask you this question too as I seek to expound this passage to you.

[33 : 11] What are you doing where you are? Are you getting adequate rest? Are you thinking of life as so crammed full of things that you need to do in your work or meet all your deadlines that you're not giving time to the Lord, giving time to your Bible reading, giving time to listening to the Word being preached, giving time to prayer?

What are you doing here? You can put your own name to that. Whatever this here is for you tonight, make sure that you are actually getting rest, the recovery times, the mind relaxation, the study of other things other than your everyday work and especially your relationship with God.

Is God saying to you tonight, what are you doing here when he knows you're not where you should be? And that's for you to answer and I must answer too for myself.

So there's a question addressing a runaway, a prophet, that in your own case and my case, we know who we are, we know where we are, and we know how we've got there.

What are you doing here, Elijah? Secondly, it's a question directing a return, a return to his service, a return to where he should be for the Lord.

[34 : 40] And in that, there's a very important feature down further in the chapter and it's actually between the two questions where they're situated and it's the voice of God. But notice, first of all, how there are three elements that God revealed to Elijah but God was not in them.

You have there the wind, first of all, then the earthquake and then the fire. The Lord passed by and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord.

This was a hurricane or typhoon but the Lord was not in the wind. The earthquake, the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, a fire but the Lord was not in the fire.

Now these three elements, the wind and the earthquake, the fire, not all necessarily together but in many cases throughout the Bible you'll find them associated with theophanies as theologian calls them, revelations of God.

Revelations of God and his power especially, find it in the likes of Psalm 68 for example, when the Lord went before his people, the Lord who rides on the sky as his chariot, that sort of language, God's theophanie, God's revelation of himself especially against his enemies and remember Baal, the gods, the Baals of the people of Israel in Elijah's time that they've taken from the Canaanites and added to their own religious services.

[36 : 11] Well, for Elijah, God, although he demonstrated something of his power in the descent of the fire, there's been no theophany, there's been no dramatic revelation of God and what has happened has not changed the people.

That's why the Lord is emphasizing the Lord was not in the wind, he was not in the earthquake, he was not in the fire but after the fire the sound of a low whisper, a thin, small voice as the AV has it. Here, the sound of a low whisper, a thin sound like a human voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak because that thin, small, low whisper indicated God is now here.

And what is Elijah going to learn from this? What he's going to learn from this is that that is God's norm. God's norm is not to change people by great demonstrations and miraculous demonstrations of his power.

God's norm is to change people through his word, through this thin, silent, like, slow whisper. That is God's norm, not the spectacular and the miraculous.

[37 : 36] And that's where the charismatics are actually leading people astray because they're seeking to make, extreme charismatics at least, are seeking to make the spectacular the norm and everything else then follows on from that.

And so tonight in your life, don't wait for the dramatic. Of course God can use something dramatic and he does. And God is still able to work miracles and he does, I'm sure, in many places, many instances.

But that is not his norm. His norm is by the word and by the gospel, by his word. Don't wait for the dramatic when you have the Bible open before you. That's the norm, that's the word, that's the low whisper to your soul through which God is addressing you always.

Remember that in Christ's teaching, you find in Luke chapter 16, the account you have there of the rich man and Lazarus.

Lazarus being a poor beggar and the rich man who had so many things in his life and they both died and Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom, went to heaven and the rich man ended up in the

torments of a lost eternity.

[38 : 53] And as you read through the passage, many things about it that are mysterious, I'm sure, we can't just follow every particular point as we would like perhaps, but the conversation between Abraham and the rich man in eternity, as it takes you through these verses, comes to the point where the rich man says, I beg you Father Abraham, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment, and Abraham said, they have Moses and the prophets, of course at that time, what that meant was they have the Bible, they have God's word, no Father Abraham, he said, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent, he said, if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced, if someone should rise from the dead, you see what that's saying, if we don't accept the word of

God, nothing is going to convince us by way of miracle, if we already put the word of God aside, it's the thin, silent, like whisper of the word of God that comes to make its own dramatic impact in our lives, don't go by your feelings, don't go by your sense of needing something dramatic, don't go by feeling that perhaps God is not with you, you'd like to feel something more of this, rely upon the promises of God's word, God says he will be with you, when God says he will bless you, when God says, trust in me and I will keep you safe, believe that, when God says I will go with you into the next step of your Christian life, your Christian experience, I will go with you into whatever I call you to do for me, believe that, don't wait for something spectacular, something by way of feeling, it's a question where the voice of God accompanies it to really get into

Elijah's situation and into his heart and that's what leads to the redirection for more service for God, God was still going to work in Israel and Elijah was still needed by God in that work, he was to be a part of that, it wasn't to be as Elijah himself wanted and indeed it's interesting that when Elijah eventually came to leave this world, it wasn't like he was under the broom tree asking for God to just take him away, just let me slip away, a chariot of fire came for him and brought him from this world to heaven, how wrong we can be sometimes in our thoughts and in our requests, anyway here is God saying to him go, verse 19 return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus and then he adds some other details to that for

Elijah's task when he gets back there. Are you tonight running from God? Are you tempted to run from the struggles of following the Lord?

Have you lost something of your desire that you maybe once had and yet want to get back? Have you fallen off from prayer, from Bible reading?

[42 : 36] Have you taken steps away from God and from your duties? Have you allowed the devil to convince you that it's just futile now, that you're not achieving much, that this Christian life is just too difficult, there's too many demands on you, and you just can't cope with it all?

Well, you see, God is now calling you back to himself. He's calling you and he's calling me tonight by this question, what are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing where you are?

are you still running away from me? Remember Peter, Peter and his great lapse and denying the Lord three times, and in John, you find him restored, John chapter 21, where Jesus met with him, and very interestingly, along with and indeed prior to his re-establishment as a disciple, you have the interview, you have the questioning, similar to Elijah, of God, of Jesus this time, when he asks him, do you love me more than these, do you love me, do you love me, three times, and Jesus re-establishes him as an apostle and an active disciple, but after all this, in verse 19, after saying this, and after telling him the kind of thing that he was going to have in his future, where he would have this type of situation in his death, he was going to be taken into custody or at least encumbered and not able to go where he would want to go.

After saying this, he said to him, follow me. And then in the passage, following that, you find Peter saying about John, he said to Jesus, what about this man?

What's going to be the case with him? And Jesus said, if it is my will that he remains until I come back, what is that to you? You follow me.

[44 : 44] See, twice in that passage, to the same man Peter, Jesus, is re-emphasizing for him, here's what I want you to do, here's what your path is, follow me.

Never mind how that relates to somebody else's path, never mind how it may be different to someone else, you follow me. Tonight, that's what he's saying to me, that's what he's saying to you, that's what he's saying to you, even if you haven't yet begun to follow him, in a way of obedience, and a way of yielding to his will.

Never mind what somebody else is doing, never mind where you've seen lapses in other people who have professed the Lord, sad though that is, and God is calling them back by this as well. You follow me. Because after all, Jesus is all we need. Again, to the disciples, let me finish with this, in John chapter 16, you find Jesus addressing the disciples before he went out to face his captors and those who are going to crucify him.

he was teaching them there of how he had overcome the world and how they would find difficulty in the world in following him. He said, I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. [46 : 17] In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, be encouraged, I have overcome the world. And really the meaning of that is, I have conquered the world.

I have gained victory over the world. You see what he's saying to the disciples is, in the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, you can do it.

That's not what he's saying. He's not saying to them, take heart, you can do it, you can manage it, you can overcome it. He's not saying to them, you can do it. He's saying, I have done it.

That's the key. I have conquered. And he doesn't just mean, I have conquered by winning the fight that I had to win for myself.

What he's really saying by this is, I have conquered not just for myself, I have conquered for you too. I have won.

[47 : 23] the fight for you, I have done it for you too. All that I require of you now is that you follow me. What are you doing here?

Let's pray. Father, we give thanks that you address us through your word in a way that penetrates into our minds, our hearts, our motives.

we give thanks for the good intention that you have, O Lord, in doing this. We do confess, O Lord, that we all of us fail at some point or other, that sometimes we fail frequently and repeatedly, that we fall into the same traps of the evil one, or give in to the dictates of our own sinful hearts.

Forgive us, we pray, and teach us to follow you, and teach us to take our confidence from the fact of your own victory, and that we can therefore build on that for ourselves.

And so we ask that you receive our worship for our sin, for Jesus' sake. Amen. We're going to sing again, and the conclusion this time we're singing is in Psalm 18, and sing Psalms.

[48 : 43] Psalm 18, and that's from verse 27 to 32. You save the humble and the meek, but bring the proud down from their height.

You, Lord, will keep my lamp aflame. God turns my darkness into light. I need to take the tune that's recommended.

here. You save the humble and the meek, but bring the proud down from their height.

You save the humble and the meek, but bring the proud down from their height.

you, you, you, Lord, will keep my lamp aflame. God turns my darkness into light.

[50 : 01] With help from God, I can I can I can advance against a troop and rout them all.

And with the aid my God will give. I can I can I can leap all at any wall.

For perfect is the way of God God, no flow is found within his heart.

To all who put their trust in him a shield and refuge is the Lord.

For who is God except the Lord besides our God who is the rock He is the God who gives me strength and He perfects the path I walk.

[51 : 50] Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore. Amen. Well, once again, let me thank you for joining us for this short service of worship.

And I pray, as we always pray, that God will keep you safe in the days ahead and that He will bless this day and His word to you. Thank you.