

Sunday June 22, 2025
Second Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon: "Hide and Seek"

Many, many, many moons ago, when I was a child, my family was on a camping trip. In the middle of the night my brother said, "O drat!" My mom, who was still awake reading a book asked, "What's wrong Alan?" "Brad found me," he replied. "What?" mom asked. "Brad found me. We were playing hide and seek and Brad found me." "Where were you hiding?" mom asked. "I was hiding in the garage, and Brad found me," Alan replied. The conversation went on for about half an hour. My brother was sound asleep and had no recollection of the conversation in the morning.

Hide and seek was a common game when I was a kid; back in the days when, in the summer, kids left home after breakfast and were expected to be home for supper, and after supper, when the streetlights came on. Did any of you ever play hide and seek when you were younger? Did you prefer to hide or to seek? When you were 'it', how did it feel when you couldn't find someone who was hiding?

In the days of Elijah, Ahab was king of the northern kingdom of Israel. He married Jezebel, daughter of King Ethbaal of Tyre and Sidon. Jezebel convinced Ahab to worship the Baal known as Melqart, a storm god of Tyre. In addition, Jezebel had all of the prophets of Israel's God put to death. Only Elijah survived.

Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal, all 450 of them, to a test to see who the true God was, Baal or Yahweh. They met on Mount Carmel, and, well, to make a long story short (you remember the story anyway) Baal was unable to pass the test, but the God of Elijah succeeded and Elijah had all of the prophets of Baal put to the sword. And that is where we pick up the story today. Ahab told Jezebel of all that Elijah had done and Jezebel promised to send Elijah to meet his ancestors within 24 hours. Elijah fled.

Elijah fled Jezebel's forces. Why, I wondered? Hadn't God defeated Baal? Hadn't all of the prophets of Baal been put to the sword? Wasn't God with Elijah?

Jezebel had killed all of God's prophets, with the exception of Elijah, and now she had threatened to do likewise to him. Perhaps God was hiding, or Jezebel would not have succeeded in killing all of the prophets of God. Can you imagine how Elijah may have felt if God were hiding?

And where did Elijah go to seek God? Nowhere other than Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai, the very place where God had revealed Himself to Moses, and gave Moses the ten commandments. Surely Mount Horeb was a place where God could be found. Elijah holed up in a cave on the mountain. A wind so strong it split rocks came, and God was not in the wind. An earthquake shook the mountain, and God was not in the earthquake. Fire came, and God was not in the fire. And then there was complete and utter silence. It was so quiet, Elijah could hear the blood rushing through his veins. He could hear his own heartbeat. And he wrapped his mantle about himself and left the cave and there, in the silence, he met God. When he stopped seeking out God, God was found.

The gospel lesson today is about a man, a man possessed of demons, who went to a quiet place, a cemetery, and there he too met God. Jesus demanded to know the demons' name – Legion – and cast them into a herd of swine, who rushed down into the sea and were drowned. There in the quiet of a cemetery, after all of the voices in his head had been banished, God was made known to the demon-possessed man.

Our lives are so busy, and hectic, and noisy. People are constantly on their phones, even when they are sitting with a friend in a coffee shop or driving a car or walking their child through the park. And nobody even gives a second thought to God, just to the driver who hasn't pulled away from the intersection when the light turned green three nanoseconds earlier, and then there is more noise as the horns blare.

It is the first Sunday of summer, and summer is a time when many of us like to get away to a golf course, or a campground, or take a hike on a wilderness trail. We like to get away from the noise and the bustle of everyday life. I think we are often too busy for God in all of the hustle and bustle of everyday life. I wonder, when we get away from the noise in our busy lives and the noise in our heads, is that when we find God? When the sound of our electronics and motors and music is stilled, is that when we are able to hear the still small voice? I wonder, is that still small voice always there, and we just can't hear it for the noise, just like Elijah couldn't hear it over his fear of Jezebel, or the demoniac couldn't hear it for the voices in his head?

This summer I hope you are all able to spend time with friends and family, but above all, I hope you are able to spend some time in silence, listening to that still small voice of God. When we stop seeking, we find God and discover that God was not hiding at all. We were just inattentive.