

Straight from the "Hart"

June 19, 2022 – Father's Day



Opening Prayer Our Heavenly Father, we have gathered again to honor your holy name and to experience your never-failing love expressed through the rich gift of your Son Jesus Christ. In this time together, establish us more solidly on the foundation of salvation that you so generously offer through him. We offer ourselves with heart-felt gratitude and for the building of your kingdom on earth. In the name of Jesus, we pray this. Amen.

Call to Worship Come, you who desire homes to be filled with God and hearts with love. Come to where Jesus' name is sweet to every ear and families hold him dear. Come to see the wisdom of prayer and sacred Word, Come to unite our hearts in love to God, and love to all will reign.

(Inspired by portions of "Happy the Home..." by Henry Ware, Jr.)

Music: God's love will reign. If we look, we can see it all around us because this is our Father's world.

This is Our Father's World

This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears
all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.

This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise,
the morning light, the lily white, declare their maker's praise.

This is my Father's world: he shines in all that's fair;
in the rustling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me everywhere.

This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget
that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.

This is my Father's world: why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!

Theme Two stories and a poem. William Bennett wrote, "The ancient Roman writer, Juvemal, gave us this advice: 'When you are contemplating some bad deed, let your infant act as a check on your headlong course to sin.'" (modernized)

In other words, before you act, consider what kind of example and influence that action will lead to, and how it will impact others – especially on this Father’s Day, and in his context, and our context for the day – how our actions impact our family and children...

Once upon a time, a man sat by the door of his house. His neighbor (who was an enemy, though neither of them knew it at the time) sat beside him and tempted him. He said, “You are poor and out of work and here is a way of bettering yourself. It will be an easy job and will bring you money; and it is no more dishonest than many things that are done every day by respectable people. You will be a fool to throw away such a chance as this. Come with me, and we will settle the matter.”

The man was listening. Just then his young wife came to the door. She was warm and rosy, for she had been washing, and she had the baby in her arms. “Will you hold baby for a few minutes? He is fretful, and I must hang out the clothes.”

The man held the baby on his knees; and as he held it, the child looked up into his face and he imagined it spoke: “Flesh of your flesh! Soul of your soul! What you sow I shall reap, and where you lead, I shall follow. Lead the way, Father for my feet come after yours.” Then the man turned to his neighbor, “Go and come here no more with your evil proposals!”

He rocked the baby and whistled a tune. Shortly, his wife came out and took the child and said to him, “How could you cry when your father was holding you? Such a father as you have, too! Mind you grow up as good a man as he is!” And she went into the house, singing to the child as she went.



Fathers do more than avoid negative for the sake of their children, they often sacrifice themselves for them, and they often even find joy in giving -- as in this next story...

Once upon a time, a man was walking down the street. He was sad at heart. Business was slow and he desired a horse that cost a thousand dollars. But he had only 800. Sure, he could buy other things with what he had, but he did not want those – so he was depressed, and he thought the world was a bad place.

As he walked, a child running toward him. When he looked at the boy, the boy’s face lightened like sunshine, and broke into a big smile. He held out his closed hand and cried out gleefully, “Guess what I have!”

The man screwed up his positive sounding voice: Something fine, I am sure!"

The boy nodded eagerly and opened his hand. "Look!" And the street rang with his happy laughter. The man looked, and in the child's hand lay a penny. (As you can tell, it is an old story)...

(An aside (not part of the story): How different this child's attitude from the one I read recently in one of those posts that displays the opposite attitude. Somebody was tweeting that his parents gifted him with an Apple 11+, and he wondered when the Apple 12 was being released – and he concluded by thinking his family – I won't use his word – but he was angrily disappointed in them...)



But not this child. He showed him his penny --

"Hurrah!" said the boy.

"Hurrah!" said the man.

Then they parted, and the child went and bought a stick of peppermint candy. And he saw all the world in red and white stripes.

Meanwhile, the man put his \$800 in the savings bank, all but 50 cents, with which he bought a white-spotted brown hobbyhorse for his little own little boy, and his son saw all the world in brown with white spots. While he rocked on the horse, he asked his father, "Is this the horse you wanted to buy so much?"

"It is the horse I have bought!" he replied.

"Hurrah!" said the little boy.

"Hurrah!" said the man. And he saw that the world was a good place after all.

And now the poem -- which sums up the influence we may have has parents and grandparents and great grandparents.

There are little eyes upon you
and they're watching night and day.
There are little ears that quickly
take in every word you say.
There are little hands all eager
to do anything yoo do;
and a little boy who's dreaming
of the day he'll be like you.

You're the little fellow's idol,
you're the wisest of the wise.
In his little mind about you
no suspicions ever rise.
He believes in you devoutly,
holds all that you say and do;
he will say and do, in your way,
when he's grown up like you.
There's a wide-eyed little fellow
who believes you're always right;
and his eyes are always opened,
and he watches day and night.
You are setting an example
every day in all you do,
for the little boy who's waiting
to grow up to be like you.

Abridged and Adapted from
Bennet, William J., editor with commentary,
The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey:
"The Baby" and "A Fortune" by Laura E Richards,
and "Little Eyes Upon You" (Anonymous)

Father's Day Responsive Affirmation

And so in thanks for the crucial role fathers (or those who have been those examples for us) have played and continue to play in our lives even if they have gone on before us and are now with the Lord, -- let's join Ben on the yellow font while I read the white for this responsive Father's Day Affirmation.

(P – Pastor, **C – Congregation**)

P: Men who take on the role of loving fathers come in a myriad of forms and styles and circumstances.

C: We celebrate and honor them all.

P: We are grateful for the men who give their lives for those he loves. For loving men who guard others from wars and woes and wickedness, who press on with broken hearts (sometimes hidden from view) because they are entrusted with life and called to be strong men facing a cruel world that is quick to alienate, ridicule, shame, and destroy.

C: We pray they find hope, healing, and harmony.

P: We are grateful for men who have influenced our lives in so many ways, by striving for wisdom and fairness, for justice with mercy, and properly channel their passions and powers for good.

C: Inspire them in the ways of loving-kindness that will make our world a better place.

P: We are grateful for men who have brought us to the heart of our heavenly Father's love. For those who have shown us kindness, courage, generosity, truth, compassion, faith... for those who have shown us encouragement and love.

C: We pray a blessing on all men who reveal a glimpse of your loving presence on earth, where we all find the peace of forgiveness and abounding love.

(Inspired, blended, and adapted from two Father's Day affirmations, taken from umcdiscipleship.org and Janice Hill, USA).

Special Music And as we bring honor to our earthly fathers, we also bring honor to our heavenly Father who is our example, to say the least. Charles is going to sing about the positive relationship we can have with him.

Good, Good Father

Oh, I've heard a thousand stories of what they think You're like
But I've heard the tender whisper of love in the dead of night
And You tell me that You're pleased and that I'm never alone

Refrain

You're a good, good Father.
It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are.
And I'm loved by You.
It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am.

Oh, I've seen many searching for answers far and wide
But I know we're all searching
for answers only You provide
'Cause You know just what we need
before we say a word

Refrain

('Cause) You are perfect in all of Your ways.
You are perfect in all of Your ways.
You are perfect in all of Your ways to us.
(Repeat)



Oh, it's love so undeniable I, I can hardly speak.
 Peace so unexplainable I, I can hardly think.
 As You call me deeper still As You call me deeper still
 As You call me deeper still Into love, love, love

Refrain (3x)

You are perfect in all of Your ways
 (It's who You are, it's who You are, it's who You are)

You are perfect in all of Your ways
 (It's who I am, it's who I am, it's who I am)

CCLI #

Prayers Congregation shared God moment praises... with an open mic...

Pastor's Prayer Dear Lord, we are thankful for how you work in the lives of your people. The more we hear about what you do, the more we are grateful, and the more we realize how majestic you are in all the earth and even beyond the earth. When we look around at all you have done even in this small part of your Universe; it makes us wonder how special we must be that you take so much attention and care toward us, and what potential you must believe about us and in us, to grant us the privilege of being stewards of what you have created on this earth.

On this day especially, we give our thanks for our fathers and/or those men in our lives who have given us a the fatherly example. While literature abounds, we recognize, like motherhood, that fatherhood does not come with a foolproof manual, and perfection must often come through trial and error by people who are all too human. Some fathers excel while others are still striving to find their way. We ask your blessing for them all and forgiveness where it is needed and reconciliation when it is possible. We remember how many fathers have sacrificed in the big and small things to provide opportunities for their children to achieve dreams thought beyond reach.

We also remember all those who have helped fill the void when fathers pass early or are absent; grandfathers and uncles, brothers and cousins, teachers, pastors and coaches -- and the women of our families who have had to take on the role of father as well as mother. Robert Louis Stevenson wrote this home prayer for the family for us today: Lord, behold our family here assembled. We thank you for this place in which we dwell; for the love that unites us; for the peace granted us this day; for the hope with which we anticipate tomorrow; for the health, the work, the food, and the bright skies, that make our lives delightful; for our friends in all parts of the earth.

Let peace abound in our small company. Purge out of every heart the lurking grudge. Give us grace and strength to persevere. Give us the grace to accept and to forgive offenders. Forgetful ourselves, help us to bear cheerfully the forgetfulness of others. Give us courage and cheer and quiet minds. Protect our friends, soften our hearts toward our enemies. Bless us, if it may be, in all our innocent endeavors. If it may not, give us the strength to encounter that which is to come, that we may be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath, and in all changes of fortune, and down to the gates of death, loyal and loving one to another. As the clay is to the Potter, as the windmill is to the wind, as children are to their father/parents, we appeal for your help and mercy for Christ's sake.

Praises and Petitions And for these of our church family and beyond, we pray again for * Sabrina Allred recovering from surgery, * for Parker and his seizures, * for Gary White, from covid, who is much improved, but still has a way to go * For the family and friends of Butch, the extended family relative of the pastor's friend) who died Thursday night or Friday morning from heart damage. *and for online viewer's Evan's healing after hip surgery, * for Pat's Schleh's brother's radiation treatments, * and friend Jackie recuperating from knee surgery, * and for the family and friends of John Bugis who passed away last week, * and for Judy's healing from cancer, and spine injury, * and for Shelley Whitehead who had cancer surgery this week, * and for Marty Hansen who had knee replacement surgery a Friday, * and for Tommy, who struggles to get the help he needs from various agencies that should be helping him. * We also pray travel mercies for Jan Martin who is heading to Tennessee tomorrow, * For Margaret Melville's friend Vance McCabe who is hospitalized with multiple problems, * and for Terri's friend Janice who will require a lung removal; and finally, we pray for Remus, a 5-year-old with cancer, for whom we now dedicate this quilt.

Quilt God of love and comfort, we give thanks for the opportunity to express our love and concern for others -- to share a tangible gift of encouragement. For while we know that you are always present in our lives and that your love transcends all tragedy, illness and pain, we also know that sometimes a physical reminder can help bring focus to your hope, healing and peace. We pray that this quilt will do that for Remus and his parents and extended family.



As the quilt is wrapped around him, may its warmth be sensed as your love and care. In the midst of challenges he and his parents may struggle to understand, may it elicit trust in your goodness and hope in your faithfulness. Grant that they all be filled with your patience and joy throughout this difficult journey they face. Calm their doubts and fears -- knowing that you are beside them every moment of every day and bring healing to hearts and well as bodies. We pray for all these things in Jesus' name.



Now holy God, for all that lay before us, men and women alike, fill us with strength and courage, with discernment and compassion, that we may be instruments of your will on earth as it is in heaven, that we may live as you taught us to pray. And this week we will sing it... **LORD'S PRAYER.**

Intro to and Bible Reading: Introduction

The Lord proclaims how diligently he reached out to his people even when they continued to provoke him with neglect and disobedient living. But to those who become or remain faithful -- even though surrounded by evil – God promises he will bless them and bring them through difficult times of trial ... Hear his words through the prophet Isaiah...

Bible Reading

“I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, ‘Here am I, here am I.’ All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations— a people who continually provoke me to my very face, ... This is what the Lord says: “As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes and people say, ‘Don’t destroy it, there is still a blessing in it,’ so will I do on behalf of my servants; I will not destroy [the whole nation]. I will bring forth [my true] descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit [the land], and there will my servants live. [These {lands} will be for the people who bothered to reach out to me, who wanted me in their lives, who actually bothered to look for me].



Isaiah 65:1-3a, 8,9,10b (NIV) [MSG]

Music God is a good father, gracious and patient and filled with promises - perfect in all of his ways... calling us to his love and protection and provision. Let's praise him for all he has done and is doing for us.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation.
O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear, now to his temple draw near;
join me in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigning
bears thee on eagle's wings, e'er in his keeping maintaining.
God's care enfolds all, whose true good he upholds.
Hast thou not known his sustaining?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee;
surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
who with his love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,
fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee.
Then to thy need God as a mother doth speed,
spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!
Let the amen sound from his people again;
gladly forever adore him.

Sermon Accepted: His People - Elijah

I can't tell you how tempted I was to change that lyric from "as a mother" to "as a father" just for this Father's Day, but I didn't. With experiences with God that lead to lyrics like that, it is no surprise that the prophet Isaiah could write words like this: "Comfort, oh comfort my people," says your God. "Speak softly and tenderly to Jerusalem, but also make it very clear That she has served her sentence, that her sin is taken care of—forgiven! She's been punished enough and more than enough, and now it's over and done with." (Isaiah 40:1-2 (MSG)) The nation's exile to the Babylonian Empire was nearing its end when he wrote those words. The consequences for serving false gods was ending, and the Lord pronounces a double dose of comfort. Fast forward into the future now -- we aren't sure exactly how far.

The vigorous proclamations and intercessory prayers for the community by the prophets and priests have failed to turn people to the Lord – yet! -- and away from those practices that led to the original exile. (See Isaiah 63-64)

So now we come to today's reading that was read for us. Isaiah metaphorically ushers them into the great hall of the heavenly king. Court is in session and its formal ruling is being pronounced on the religious rebels. God recounts his efforts for them.

The common Bible teaching is that it is only as God shows himself to us that we can find him. To **God makes himself known** dismantle their defense that they would say, "Well you never showed yourself, so how could we know your ways!?!?" God says, "I revealed myself to people who weren't even looking for me!"

And to the defense that they had been vigorously praying and proclaiming him -- he answers that **Prayer / Prayer in his name** there is a difference between prayers demanding God do what the requestor wants, and prayers that seek to find and accomplish God's will in the pray-ers' life. Do you get the distinction? Praying "in his name" is not a magical set of words put at the end of prayers so we can get what we want, but rather a willingness to commit and submit to his revealed character and will and wisdom and authority in our life.

Jesus gives a great example of this when he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane "...Nevertheless, not what I will [not what I desire], but as You will *and* desire." (Matthew 26:39c (AMPC)) Now don't get hung up on having to pray just right – although sometimes position of body and precision of words can help *us* find the right attitude and heart before God, What is right and important for God, what his primary concern is - is what is in your heart and attitude toward (not in the rest) as you pray to him.

God is reaching out to them with open hands -- the language is actually a posture of prayer, he is praying for them to come to him -- to a people who have deliberately turned their backs to him, intentionally blind and deaf to his pleas because they are diligently praying and pursuing their own agenda.

So in this courtroom scene, having given a pre-emptive strike on their objections and defense, God gives the closing argument: He had persistently attempted to bring comfort and healing, and they stubbornly refused to learn the lesson of exile. They continued to break their religious laws. They continued to persistently

practice pagan rites. They continued to pick at and open old wounds of unfaithful worship and self-destructive living. Therefore, the heavenly Judge pronounces the verdict. After everyone had been given multiple chances of turning to (or back to) God; even though exile had ended, the double dose of comfort that was earlier proclaimed would be revoked and there would be a final reckoning.

But even then... God promises he will not destroy everyone. He uses a common image. We've all done it – we buy the grapes, we go home, and we start looking at what is on that vine and we start picking out the good ones and put them in a bowl, and there are some that are too small, too sour, too – some are even shriveled – and we don't eat those do we? We throw them away. And God uses this imagery to say that here is this whole nation that is a bad cluster, but I am going to search through that and find every good one I can find anyway.



There may yet be some blessing in that cluster. Some juicy grape, some faithful ones that can be saved from the cluster of lifeless grapes all around them. The judgment is not designed to separate among geographical, political, economic or ethnic lines, but between true servants and the “I-will-never-repent rebellious group” that insists on its own [pagan] way of worship and politics. God calls and offers himself and his gracious presence to all, but *some* day God will separate between --- (1) those who continue to not seek or call on him, instead insistently and persistently focusing on their idols and pagan practices and not good living. *God* will separate between these and (2) those who truly call on him and pray in his name -- who faithfully submit their lives for adjusting to his good character and perfect will.

This national story continues to be repeated (in every nation) repeated over and over and is played out again and again. God is still waiting for those who respond and continue to respond to his acceptance and grace and become and/or remain faithful to him despite the circumstances of the surrounding grapes. What is described as a national scene and trial is also played out throughout history in the lives of individuals from the time of Eden on to modern day. Pick any story – almost any story in the Bible and you will see this battle raging: rebellion versus restoration, and which are we going to choose? Because it is the lectionary reading for the day – let's look at the prophet Elijah, one of God's special prophets.

1 Kings records this fascinating story that King Ahab was not a good spiritual leader, and evil king. And under the influence of his foreign wife Jezebel, he began to lead the nation toward worshipping Baal, the idol of her home country. Elijah wins a very dramatic contest on Mt. Carmel -- with the many priests of Baal versus him -- and the people realize God is the true God because of that contest. Elijah runs to Jezreel, a city about 15-20 miles away.

See 1 Kings 18:15 ff

King Ahab reports what happened on Mt. Carmel to his wife. She sends a messenger to Elijah swearing by her gods that she would kill him - quickly. Elijah is terrified and runs to Beersheba which is another 100 or so miles away. (Now that's not hopping in a car, folks – that is literally running). He leaves his assistant there in Beersheba and went on alone into the wilderness another day's journey, where he sat under a broom tree (see picture for an example of a broom tree is Israel) - and he prayed he wouldn't wake up in the morning.

See 1 Kings 19

God has granted such success in his service to him, why would he suddenly feel at wit's end against the threat of a wicked, foreign queen?



Well, it is fairly common knowledge that when we put *all* of ourselves into something, even if the result is positive, there is a let down.

► Natural let down

That is why many pastors take Monday off – after Sunday they can't take it any more 😊. (That wasn't supposed to be in the script – I had scratched that out but it got back in anyway). It is because of the depletion of physical, and emotional, and spiritual energy; and there is a natural let down. One person put it: “After the heights of triumph come the depths of despair.” Elijah was drained from his risky, bold challenge of Baal and his priests, and even more exhausted by running 130 miles.

Another factor may be that Ahab was an evil king - but he was still a king of Israel and had to

► Jezebel's “gray eminence”

stay within certain boundaries of law and protocol. He couldn't just do *anything*. But his Phoenician wife, (probably an arranged marriage to solidify relations with Lebanon) – who the Bible blames for bringing Baal worship to Israel in these days,

had who they call gray eminence (that is, an unofficial, secret, behind the throne, hidden power.). And since people did not see what they were doing, they could do *anything* they want. So when that is thrown into the equation, her threat became much more real. Ahab had to follow protocol, she didn't, she could do whatever she wanted. This is kind of how the story is told anyway. And then also add into that equation that in this time period there was a near universal suspicion of foreigners. So they didn't like her to start with

Anyway, in his fear, Elijah traveled to Beersheba, a city associated with many of early heroes of his faith journey (and his faith's history). He was turning his

**From flight to pilgrimage
Get back to your roots**

flight into a pilgrimage, in a sense. Maybe on purpose, maybe not. He was retreating to his roots in hard times. Just like Paul in the New Testament got back to the basics when imprisoned late in his life. What sometimes are called the prison letters are also theologically called the Christological Epistles. The letters that really focused on Christ, because he returned to the core of Christ's life and message in those hard times in prison.

And since a pilgrimage is ultimately a private, personal, journey; he leaves his assistant in the city and goes farther out into the wilderness to be alone. He has escaped the queen, but now asks God to be his executioner. He is exhausted, at the end of his rope, and feels he is alone, and alone remains to serve God. And he doesn't feel he can do it anymore.

God's initial answer is to send (some versions translate it "angel"), but the word is literally "messenger" and can be used of any of God's servants, human or heavenly. So we aren't really sure -- the writers of that day didn't really care what kind of messenger it was, they only cared that it happened and that God did it. Just like on Mt. Carmel, they didn't say, "Hey, good job Elijah" they only said "God is God." (1 Kings 18:39) They didn't even pay attention to Elijah. (Maybe that is why he was depressed 😞 – that wasn't part of the script either).

So, Elijah has fallen asleep under the broom tree hoping not to wake up, and the messenger wakes him and

Resupply your energy

makes him eat. Elijah wakes to bread and water which he eats and then he rests again. It is important for us to take care of ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We need to be refreshed inside and out to be at our best. It happens a second time, he eats again, and then, having gained some strength, he travels deeper into his roots -- about 260 miles further south into the desert wilderness to

Mount Horeb, or what we may better recognize as Mount Sinai where the Law was given to Moses. He finds a cave and spends the night.

Now God himself addresses him -- “What are you doing here?” It is important to explore who we are and what we are about -- under Christ. Someone likened

(See 1 Kings 19: 9-14 (NIV))
Get alone with God

the question to a horseback army unit in which the sergeant yells to a soldier standing beside his horse, [say harshly] “Who gave you permission to dismount!?” I do not think the question had that military sternness -- I imagine it to be soft and full of understanding love and mercy, but does force Elijah to look at where he is at, and look within and consider why he is hiding in a cave instead of busy at his ministry 500 miles to the north where he ought to be.

Elijah is quick with the answer. He was probably going through it – running it through his head like a negative repeating tape throughout his miles of travel. He doesn't blame Ahab. He doesn't blame Jezebel. Instead, he says he has served God zealously, but the entire nation has torn down altars, rejected their covenant, and put God's prophets to death. And now he is the *only one* left in the land, and now they are trying to kill him too. (1 Kings 19:10) He was there because he *felt isolated and worthless* against the forces of evil.



God tells Elijah to get out of the cave that he was hiding in, and stand on the mountain for he is about to pass by. The story is very similar to Moses' experience. (See Exodus 33:19-23). Both sought the protection of cave on the same mountain, both are terrified of what they experience; both learn that they cannot fully comprehend God. (With Moses, he was only able to see the back of God after he had already passed by). For Elijah, God was not in the wind, earthquake, or fire storms that preceded God's passing by.

When the storms subsided, Elijah came out and he heard a still small voice -- which is the best our English can get at it -- to convey the Hebrew which is something like “a voice [or sound] of fine [or thin] silence [or quietness].” A voice of fine silence, a sound of thin quietness.

It is like the pin dropping on the pillow – can you hear it? It is that pregnant silence in which one can hear that pin dropping. You can sense the tension in the room -- what is the proverb -- so thick you can cut it with a knife. The emotions of the

moment almost take on a physical presence. So quiet, yet so powerfully loud at the same time.

We all need to feel that assurance of God's presence -- to sense him communicating with us. Mother Teresa once wrote: "God cannot be found in noise and restlessness... all nature grows in silence (trees, moon, stars, [so quiet – yet so audible]) ... [if] we are to give a living, loving God to others... the more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in our active life. The voice, quietly, repeats the same question (What are you doing here, Elijah?) and Elijah gives the same answer: (I was zealous, I did all this stuff, and now everyone is being killed and I am the only one left and they are trying to kill me too.)

We don't *immediately* hear words *answering* Elijah's complaint. Instead, God simply puts him back to work – he assigns tasks for Elijah to perform, the last of which is to recruit Elisha as a trainee and eventual replacement. (I don't think that was because he had fled and failed, it just happens to be that time in his life – it was time to train somebody new...)

And this move restored a purpose to Elijah as well as giving him more than an assistant to relieve his workload, and it also meant he wasn't all alone in his tasks anymore, he had a companion.

After the tasks are assigned, *then* the Lord gives words of encouragement that he is not as alone as he thinks he is. There were still 7,000 people who did not bow down to Baal. There are a lot of good grapes left in that cluster yet. to put it in Isaiah's context). We are not the only reasonably healthy grape left clinging to the vine, we are not as alone as we think we are. God is with us and for us, and so are many others. We may not hear them speak those words very often, but they are there, probably more than we ever realize, even when -- to go back to Isaiah -- we are stubbornly moving in our own directions. Discover, or remember – It is God's amazing grace that turns us toward him, and it is his amazing grace that teaches us and meaningfully leads us all the way home ...

Find encouragement

So, learn from these two stories. Don't be among the stubborn ones who go their own way. they are spoiled – spoiled on the vine. But rather humble yourselves before God. I know I am happiest when I am working with others on a great cause -- but when I get isolated, it is easy to feel alone and sad. "And I want that horse and I can't get it and the world is a nasty place".

When those sad times come, when you feel like you are “burned out”, use these tips to let God restore you – get back to your roots, resupply your energy (spiritual, mental, physical, emotional... all of them), get alone with God, and then get active with other people. I’ll say it again. Get back to your roots, resupply your energy, get alone with God, and then get active with other people. I’ll say it again in the prayer.

Prayer Let’s pray. Lord, too often, we often take your presence, and the presence of your people for granted, and then, even in crowds, we can easily feel isolated and afraid. Whisper into our skittish souls the comforting truth of both your power and your love that offers your nurture and support. Teach us to manage our lives by placing our trust in you, by changing our habits, and by remaining open to the powerful grace of your Holy Spirit. When we feel life is too much to handle, remind us to care for our bodies, our minds, our emotions our spirit, to get back to the basics, to seek you alone, and then to get active with others and find encouragement in the ministries we share with each other, and that we don’t have to feel, and we don’t have to try, to do it alone – because you promised you’d always be with us and that you’d always have a people, in the name of our heavenly Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit that binds us together, we pray this. Amen.

Music: No matter where we are in our journey, whether we a sailing forward or experiencing setbacks, God’s grace is always reaching for us. It has led and taught us, and he will continue to lead us and teach us every step and stage of life’s journey. Let’s stand and sing of his amazing love for us.

Amazing Grace (vv 1,2,3,6)

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we first begun.

Blessing Now may God, whose love -- like rolling waves -- is never ceasing -- always refreshing -- bathe you as in clear, calm, living streams of water. May his gracious forgiveness fall over you -- so that the borders of failure, of opposition, of racial and religious heritage, of incompatible world views, of national ancestry, or of the lack of or misuse of knowledge, of rebellion or burned out isolation -- may be washed away and you are renewed in the tides of his mercy. **Amen.**