

## Archive for June, 2016

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### **Have you ever just wanted to die?**

Teaching is one of the most emotionally challenging callings and if you are called you don't know how to quit so that leaves you the alternative "I'd just rather die" which would relieve you of the guilt of quitting but leaves you so emotionally vulnerable. It is not much comfort to know that you are not alone in these feelings. These feelings seem to accompany many of God's servants. Of all people who "should not" feel this way are God's servants. The irony is that the "should not" has no bearing on reality. The reality is that sometimes the emotions, the circumstances, the imagination become so overwhelming we long for escape. Sometimes that feeling is fleeting, sometimes it is a long term companion. The Bible has a number of personalities who share these overwhelming emotions.

Jonah might not be the best example because he was running from God. "Throw me overboard. Let me die" Even after he was rescued by God, he still wanted to die. Jeremiah is another example who was so overwhelmed by his mission and his emotions that he wished he hadn't been born. But the story that strikes me the hardest, the most difficult to wrap my mind around, is the story of Elijah. There he is standing on the mountaintop mocking the prophets of Baal. Full of confidence, faith and power declaring for Jehovah. Pouring water on the altar, pouring water on the wood. Pouring more water and more – no accidental spark of fire is going to be the calling card of Jehovah. And then!

I don't think you can say all hell breaks loose but what breaks loose makes hell tremble – the fire of God, the power, the majesty, the terror. There is nothing left of the sacrifice, nothing left of the altar – the water, the rocks – God envelops all. And there stands Elijah! The prophets of Baal were defeated. God has shown His power. And Elijah full of God's power races the chariot. From mountaintop to mountaintop Elijah is God's champion. Was the height so tall that the fall was so expected?

Next, we have Elijah in fear for his life – and wishing to die. I am not sure we would call anyone in his state of mind good company but it is a reminder, that as alone and as desperate that we may feel, we are not the only one who has walked this path. It may not be much comfort as we go through our own dark nights but we realize that each of our Biblical examples came out on the other side. There must be something in the experience of despairing for our life that makes life on the other side have a different quality. How we hold on to that life, or let it go, may be the whole reason for the experience of despair. It is a mystery. One that forces us to cling so tightly to God when we are so absolutely sure He is not with us as we go through the silence and the despair. And yet there is always that gentle whisper of God that tells us, "I will not leave you or forsake you."