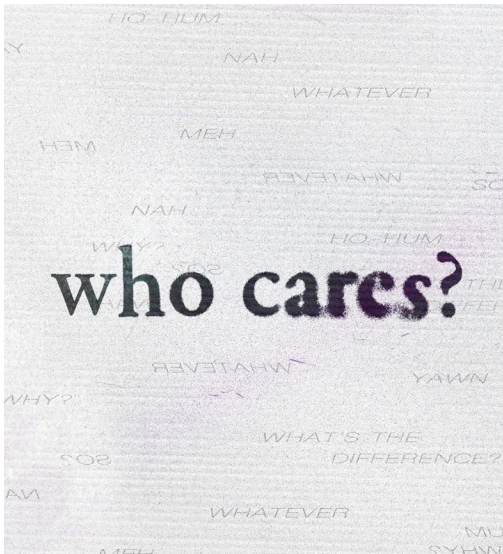




Sermon Growth Guide

October 20, 2024
Who Cares?



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Who Cares? – “Yawn”

1 Kings 19:1-12

Key Verse: “After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.” (1 Kings 19:12)

Big Idea: God’s Faithfulness often shows up in the mundane.

Foundations

Elijah led a dramatic life and often witnessed the amazing things that God was doing. He had just experienced the miraculous event of seeing the prophets of Baal proven false. Having angered Jezebel and embarrassed her and her gods, Elijah ordered all the prophets of Baal slaughtered. Furious, she was consumed with finding him. This passage occurs as Elijah flees for his life. At this point, out of sheer exhaustion, he has given up: “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”

God had bigger plans for Elijah, but first, He showed His care for Elijah’s basic needs. God provided snacks and a nap, demonstrating His faithfulness in the mundane amid chaos. This sustenance prepared Elijah for the journey ahead and inspired his own faithfulness. God renewed Elijah so he could, in turn, follow Him for 40 days and 40 nights all the way to Mt. Horeb.

Elijah didn’t know he was preparing to witness God’s presence in a tangible way. The great and powerful wind, earthquake, and fire mirrored the intensity of Elijah’s life, but God was instead in the gentle whisper. God’s people are rarely sheltered from life’s storms, but He consistently shows up.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read 1 Kings 19:1-12.

Why was Elijah so exhausted? He was moving from one traumatic, dramatic event to another. The Bible acknowledges the anguish and fatigue that God’s people experience. In this context, God provided Elijah with a snack and a nap, highlighting His care for our basic needs amid turmoil.

Applying God’s Word

Pastor Tim says, “God is there. In the quiet, ordinary faithfulness, God is there.” Where are you today? Are you in a season of drama and chaos, seeking to see God in the ordinary? Or are you experiencing a consistent, normal life and need to be reminded that God is present and faithful in the mundane?

Witnessing God’s Word

Lamentations 3:22-23 says, “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

How can you begin looking for evidence of God’s faithfulness, even in quiet, ordinary moments? What impact can this recognition have on your life?

Tim encourages us to remain steady and focus on the next thing. What is the next thing in your life?

Before I read this passage, let me give you some context. This is the life of the Prophet Elijah. I won't give you his whole story, but just before the passage we are about to read, Elijah was in a contest on Mt. Carmel. The prophets of the false god Baal tried to get Baal to send fire to take up a sacrifice, but nothing happened. Then Elijah prayed to God, and God sent fire and took up the sacrifice. Elijah put hundreds of false priests to the sword. Queen Jezebel, who liked those priests, found out about it. That's where we pick up the story.

Are you getting enough sleep? In 1893, the World's Fair was held in Chicago. The big excitement was all about electricity. With electricity, we can light up buildings at night. The city won't be dark and dangerous anymore. Huge spotlights scanned the skies. President Grover Cleveland pushed a button on May 1, 1893, and over 100,000 lights went on filling the streets and parks of the fair with electrical illumination. It changed the world. Do you know what people said? Most people said, Wow! Hooray! It can be day all night! But farmers outside of Chicago experienced the first light pollution. They said, we are all going to die. Why? The cows can't sleep. I don't want to say they were right, but they were kind of right. When the cows can't sleep, bad things happen. Same with pastors. Same with you. The human body needs seven to eight hours of sleep per night to function properly. The CDC says one-third of us don't get enough sleep and nearly 40% of adults report falling asleep during the day without meaning to at least once a month. Sunday mornings, mostly. 20% of U.S. adults sleep fewer than five hours.

We've been studying apathy in this series, Who Cares? What is it that makes us demotivated, unfeeling, stuck in malaise, and how do we overcome it? We have looked at the danger of apathy, and its appeal. We saw the commonness of it. Then we looked at various forms: compassion-fatigue apathy, motivation apathy, and now, today, let's talk about exhaustion apathy. You might think we should have started there. I would care,

truly I would, but I am just too dog tired! I really would care, but I am just so exhausted! Try me after a nap. For now, the best you'll get out of me is a Yawn. "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." (Ephesians 5:14) We can't be a who cares people. Our ballots are on our kitchen counter. Barna says 50% of Christians plan not to vote. Please vote. It is an act of neighbor love. We are facing big issues, life or death issues for the next generation. Marijuana. Abortion. Please educate yourself on the issues, pray, seek the scriptures and vote as you believe will promote the common good. Our commitment card is on our kitchen counter. Please pray. Ask the Lord what He wants you to give to support His ministry next year. We can't say who cares. We need to turn who cares into fervent prayers.

Elijah was just plain tired. So tired, the energy for life drained out of him. So tired he could not bounce back, the resilience was gone. So tired he thought he could not get out of bed in the morning. Jezebel was not someone to cross swords with. She was a tough leader. When Elijah heard she was out to get him, he ran. Conflict can drain you. I happen to be a bit of a people-pleaser myself. Nothing takes the wind out of my sails like thinking someone is mad at me or disappointed. Luckily, in my job, that never happens. Wait, why did you laugh? "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, Lord,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.'" (1 Kings 19:3-4) Elijah went from the mountain top of defeating hundreds of false priests to the valley of despair. Exhausted.

"Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar

who cares?

of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.” (1 Kings 19:5-6) Elijah the great prophet, Elijah the hero, the conqueror. It is a privilege to see this moment. It took all Elijah had in him just to get up, take some food, drink some water, and fall back to sleep. It is hard to care when you are simply out of strength. Sapped. “The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, ‘Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.’ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.” (1 Kings 19:7-9) Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. Some think this is the same cave where Moses was when the hand of God covered him in the cleft of the rock and the glory of the Lord passed by.

Sometimes just getting up and doing the ordinary things is exactly what faith demands, and exactly where God will be glorified. Oswald Chambers wrote, “The angel did not give Elijah a vision, or explain the Scriptures to him, or do anything remarkable; he told Elijah to do the most ordinary thing, to get up and eat. If we were never depressed we should not be alive; it is the nature of a crystal never to be depressed. A human being is capable of depression, otherwise there would be no capacity for exaltation. ... When the Spirit of God comes He does not give us visions; He tells us to do the most ordinary things conceivable...The inspiration which comes to us in this way is an initiative against depression; we have to do the next thing and do it in the inspiration of God.” The most ordinary thing. The next thing. Take a nap. Eat a good meal. Rise up and take the next step. That is no small thing. Faithfulness is tried in the ordinary days. The inspiration of the mountain top is played out in the mundane duties of the valley. Referring to a different passage in Isaiah 40, Chambers said we all love mounting up on wings like eagles, we all want to run and not grow weary, but that’s not normal life. “Walking and not fainting is

the life that glorifies God and satisfies the heart of Jesus to the full—the plain daylight life, unmarked, unknown; only occasionally, if ever, does the marvel of it break on other people.” Get up and eat. Do the next thing.

“There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’ He replied, ‘I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.’” (1 Kings 19:9-10) That’s a little bit of lament, complaint with a purpose. Dejection and despair is no place to camp. What are you doing here? God asks. Maybe Elijah was embarrassed. After defeating hundreds of priests of Baal by God’s power, he wasn’t bold enough to stand up to the threat of Jezebel. Maybe he was disappointed with God, that God didn’t finish the job but seemed to leave him vulnerable to losing after all, to getting killed. Now Elijah is a refugee. At the end of a long career of ministry, this is where he lands? Alone and exiled. Elijah opens his heart in lament. That’s okay. God can take it. He wants it actually. It’s honest.

The Lord met Elijah there. “The Lord said, ‘Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.’ Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.” (1 Kings 19:11-12) God is there. In the quiet, ordinary faithfulnesses God is there. Not a flash. Not a show. Not an earthquake or a lightning blast. Just a still small voice. The Holy Spirit within. God is with you. You can rise and do the next thing to the glory of God.

who cares?

Alan Noble wrote a book called *On Getting Out of Bed: The Burden & Gift of Living*. He is very open about his own mental health struggles, which are substantial, but says we all have to make decisions each day, decisions that will speak. Our decisions and actions will either say, "Life is not worth living and you are not worth my time," or "God made this world and made it good; no matter how I feel, I will love God and love my neighbor today." We all make decisions. "The most fundamental decision is the decision to get out of bed. And it too communicates something. The decision to get out of bed is the decision to live. It is a claim that life is worth living despite the risk and uncertainty and the inevitability of suffering... But this isn't primarily about you. As you choose each day to act faithfully in the gift of life God has given you, you affirm the goodness of all His creation. You testify through your actions that your neighbor's life is good, that your child's life is a beautiful gift, and that your friends' lives are instances of God's grace. For if you are not God's good creation, then neither am I and neither is anyone else. And if that's the case, I really don't know what we are doing putting up with all this suffering." The gift and the responsibility to live. To rise up and do the next thing, to get out of bed, doing that says something. It bears witness. It says, God made this world, this life, and made it good. There is a meaning to this life, no matter how meaningless it momentarily appears.

Augustus Toplady didn't pull any punches. The cleft in the rock, the place where Moses hid and could see the glory of the Lord without perishing in his sinfulness, the cave where Elijah slept until the still small voice came and restored his life, the place of meeting with God, the hand of God, it's Jesus. He wrote this one: "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee; let the water and the blood, from thy wounded side which flowed, be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure. Nothing in my hand I bring, simply

to the cross I cling; naked, come to thee for dress; helpless, look to thee for grace; foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die...Rock of Ages, cleft for me; let me hide myself in thee."

Elijah rose up and did the next thing. In God's mercy, the next thing was to find another leader to join him in the responsibility of ministry: Elisha. We want to overcome apathy, not succumb to it, not wallow in it. Sometimes we are just too tired. The body needs rest. If we treated a pet as poorly as we treat our own bodies, we would be arrested for neglect! You need a nap and a snack. Then, then you need to rise up and do the next thing. Faithfulness is not proved in soaring like an eagle or exulting in the mountain top. Faithfulness is the walk that walks and does not faint. Steady on. Do the next thing. Who told us we didn't have to do a thing unless we felt like it? The Rock of Ages, Jesus, he made a hiding place for us, a place to meet with God, a place to be refreshed, restored and called back to service. Jesus made this possible, this renewal of life, by giving His own life away. Thank God He didn't wait until He felt like it.

who cares?