

MESSAGE OUTLINE

Thin Places: Seeing the Year Ahead with God Listening for God's Guidance

1 Kings 19:8-13 (NIV)

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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?"

¹⁰ 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."

¹¹ 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. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

NOTES:

Limits

"It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life" -1 Kings 19:4

- God first meets his physical needs:
 - An angel provides food, water, and sleep—twice (1 Kings 19:5–7).
- God addresses Elijah's body before his calling, showing divine care for human limits.

"The world's needs are far greater than my personal supply. This means I am not called to meet all the needs around me. God is the miracle worker. I am not. I am responsible to obey God and to do the one role he has uniquely assigned to me and to trust him with the rest." - Peter Scazzero

Mountain

..he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God -1 Kings 19:8

One learns that the world, though made, is yet being made.

That this is still the morning of creation. That mountains, long conceived, are now being born, brought to light by the glaciers, channels traced for rivers, basins hollowed for lakes.

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. . . . The whole wilderness in unity and interrelation is alive and familiar... the very stones seem talkative, sympathetic, brotherly. . . Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike.

This natural beauty-hunger is made manifest . . . in our magnificent National Parks—Nature's sublime wonderlands, the admiration and joy of the world.—John Muir

Wisper

And after the fire came a gentle whisper. -1Kings 19:12

"A still small voice" (KJV)

"A gentle whisper" (NIV)

"A sound of sheer silence" (NRSV)

- Hebrew phrase: qōl demāmāh daqqāh
 - qōl = sound/voice
 - demāmāh = silence, stillness
 - daqqāh = thin, delicate, fine
 - The most literal sense is **"a thin silence"**

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

January 11, 2026

As needed, refer to the Order of Worship and Resources at solanabeach.church for sermon video, message outline, resources and small group questions print version.

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Before beginning your time in the passage this week, create intentional time getting acquainted or re-acquainted with one another. Use the "small group table talk" resource or ask the following question: *Where is a place you feel most calm or at peace?*

CONNECT WITH GOD *(Select one of the below practices.)*

- **Centering Prayer:** In this practice we quiet our minds, cease striving and make room for God's deep work in us. We invite the Holy Spirit to work unhindered by our distractions and efforts, giving consent to God's healing and inspiring work in our innermost selves. We trust that God knows us better than we know ourselves and can be at work in the unconscious and unknown parts of us, bringing healing and transformation.
 - Take a moment to breathe, slow down and be attentive. Choose a sacred focus for your prayer time. This could be a name for God or simply "Lord, I am Yours." Or you can choose an image to hold in your mind's eye like Jesus' loving look or Jesus calming the sea. Or you can focus with your breath, paying attention to your inhalations and exhalations. Using your sacred focus, quiet your mind. When your mind wanders, return to your sacred focus, trusting that the Holy Spirit is at work in you.
- **Journaling:** Receive these words of blessing from John O'Donohue and reflect on them through journaling: "May you allow the wild beauty of the invisible world to gather you, mind you, and embrace you in belonging."

CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- **Alone:** Read 1 Kings 19:8-13.
 - Have you ever experienced a "thin place"? A thin place is a moment where God felt present or close? What made it feel meaningful?
 - How does this passage shape your understanding of how God meets us?
- **Together or in smaller groups:** Pray and Read again 1 Kings 19:8-13.
- **Together** as a whole group: Share your own reflections from the prompts. Also, consider reviewing together the concept and tradition of "thin places".

"The thin place is where the veil between this world and the next is so sheer that it is easy to step through." -Barbara Brown Taylor

CONNECT WITH SCRIPTURE

If needed, read the passage again. Then select the best questions or customize the questions for your group.

- Review the sermon outline.
- What do you know about the context and background of this Old Testament passage?
- Why do you think Elijah went to Horeb?
- What similarities and differences do you notice between 1 Kings 19:8-13 and Exodus 24:12-18 from last Sunday?
- Where do you see a "thin place" in this story about Elijah?
- Is there anything unexpected or surprising about this passage?
- What do the wind, earthquake, and fire represent to you? Why might God not have been in them?
- Do you think thin places are more about *location, posture*, or something else? Why?
- Is there a practice that might help you become more attentive to God's presence this week?
- How might God be inviting you to create space for thin places in your daily life?

ENGAGE AND EXPLORE

Together: explore this quote, in connection with the passage this week.

"Beauty isn't all about just nice loveliness, like. Beauty is about more rounded, substantial becoming. So I think beauty in that sense is about an emerging fullness, a greater sense of grace and elegance, a deeper sense of depth, and also a kind of homecoming for the enriched memory of your unfolding life." (John O'Donohue, Podcast: "The Inner Landscape of Beauty," On Being Project) See video here: <https://solanabeach.church/011126>.

PRAYER

Invite one another to sit in silence. Open the time with the prayer included below. In stillness, offer the following question to God in prayer: *"God, where are you whispering to me right now?"* Continue in silence for a while. Then, ask someone to close the time in prayer.

"God of the quiet heart, teach me to hear your whisper. Calm the storms within me and let the small voice of your love guide my steps. May I recognize you not in the roar, but in the gentle presence that steadies my soul." (Prayer by Keith Riley)