

God In The Little Things

1 Kings 19: 4-15

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There is a reason I never got especially good at playing the violin. I took weekly private lessons from 3rd grade until High School and played in the school orchestra all those years too.

The big problem was my practice habits. Or lack thereof.

I never wanted to practice, my parents were pretty dutiful about getting me to do it most nights, but I rushed through, I didn't ever seem to really focus on what I was doing.

And so by the time I had made it to the lessons I had made very little progress. I was creeping along, little by little, mostly just with what I could pick up in that one hour each week.

Today I am beginning a sermon series called “Holy Home” because I am worried that too many of us take that same approach to our spiritual growth and, for those of us who are parents, the spiritual growth of our children.

We come to worship on Sunday morning, to spend an hour a week getting a boost in our spiritual journey. But if we don’t practice during the week. I can tell you, it won’t be enough.

Truthfully, the vast majority of what children learn about God and faith they learn from how it is practiced in their homes. And it is nearly impossible to have your life transformed by Jesus, or to come to reliably trust God’s love for you, if you leave it all up to what happens in this hour on Sunday morning.

That’s the hard truth.

The good news is that growing a relationship with God, and nurturing your connection with what is Holy, is not as hard as technically challenging or rigorous as learning to play the violin.

But it does require just as much practice.

This church is here for you, like my violin teacher was for me. To keep me moving forward. To hold me accountable to my own growth. To give me new resources and insights that I would not have discovered on my own. To pass down the accumulated wisdom of generations. To challenge me when I needed to be pushed. To encourage me when I was feeling discouraged. To pick me up after my big mistakes.

I want to say one more thing, I am saying we in all of this because this is frankly something I am needing to improve at as well. Before Cora was born, Molli and I were quite content with our individual spiritual lives. I do most of my praying in the church office before I come home.

Now, I am quickly beginning to feel the need to bring our faith more into our life at home, so that Cora will learn the practices and values of our religious tradition by osmosis as she grows up.

So for the next three weeks, I invite you to join me in thinking about how we can all bring a little more of our religious life into our homes. How we can all get a little better about practicing all week, so that we can grow, and our lives can be transformed in the way we hope for and desire.

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Away from our familiar homes for a moment though. Join me with the prophet Elijah in a cave hewn in the side of Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai.

Elijah is on the run for his life, and has reached the end of his rope. He sits down in the wilderness to give up, and asks God to take his life from him.

God sends an angel to bring Elijah something to eat and drink, and leads him into a cave where he can rest.

Then God appears to Elijah. And this description of God's appearances is so beautiful.

“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. But after the fire came a gentle whisper.”

God speaks to Elijah in the most gentle whisper. Not in the grand dramatic gesture of fire and earthquake. No splitting heavens. No hallelujah chorus. No beam of light from out of a parting cloud.

But in a whisper. A gentle. And simple whisper.

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Sometimes the Bible can seem to overwhelm with grandiosity. Big miracles. Grand cosmic signs.

Here we get an important reminder.

God is just as much in the little things. In the quiet spaces in between the memorable moments.

I think it is those quiet in between moments that give us the best opportunities to practice our faith during the week.

This week I want to talk about practicing our faith in the little ways, in little moments, during our day.

The most common times that people pray at home are before meals, and before bed. Which are wonderful little in between moments, while

transitioning from one part of our day to another, moving into a more settled place out of a more hectic one.

If you do those things already, that is wonderful.

If you are looking for a place to start, adding a simple prayer to one of these moments is a great way to practice your faith during the week.

Nothing grandiose. Not too wordy. Just something simple that will allow you to listen for God's whisper in the stillness.

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Maybe those moments don't work for you. Maybe bedtime is erratic, or family meals are not possible with your current life. I get it. I know that we are busy people.

So what is the little space in between, the little moments of stillness where you could make space for God?

What about taking a moment when everyone is in the car, ask everyone to share something they feel grateful for, and something they feel like they need help with.

Maybe you can take a moment to remember a family member or friend who could use an act of kindness, perhaps something as simple as a call.

For me personally, one of the ways I practice my faith is to sing sacred songs. One of the first songs I sang to Cora, and one I sing to her often is “Down to the River to Pray.”

The other day when I was stuck in traffic running late to a wedding I was officiating, I turned off the radio and sang Amazing Grace, to re-root myself in God’s love.

One idea I love comes from a book I would recommend for parents titled *Faith at Home* by Wendy Barre. She suggests taking arts and crafts time with younger children and have them doodle and draw on

cards to send to people they love, with each one, you can remember them, and say a little prayer for them.

There are so many ways to weave holiness into our life at home.

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Church is here to support you and offer inspiration.

We are here to offer you the deep well of our beautiful Christian tradition.

We are here to tell you important stories, to teach you foundational songs.

We are here to pick you up when you fall, and walk with you through life biggest challenges.

What this community can offer you is critically important to your journey of faith. This is not something that we can do alone. We need community.

But there is a part that is yours to do too.

You have to practice.

And if you begin to welcome God into your life, in the little in between places, the still small silences, the little breaks and gaps.

Then I deeply believe God will be able to reshape your life for the better. This faith will become your faith. It will bear fruits of courage and love greater than you could hope for. It will become a firm and unshakable foundation that will bear you through any storm. God will surprise you and call you out into the world to help bring God's love to life, and bring a bit of heaven down to Earth.

But you have to practice. You have to practice.

