

What are you doing here?

A while ago, a long while ago ok, I ran a half marathon – that's 21.2 k's. I lined up at the beginning of the race and looked at all the skinny people and all the really fit people and thought what the heck am I doing here. I have to run 21 k's and these people are half my size and twice as fast – I'm gonna come last. It made me laugh, because over the years I have said that statement to myself heaps. Like the first day at College, all these intelligent looking people who already knew a heap and there I was just a bloke from the country – what was I doing there. Or like the first time I preached, there were a couple of pastors in the congregation, ex missionaries and people who had been preaching for years – What was I doing the preaching for – they could do so much better. Imagine though – if God asked you that question right now and how would he say it. **What** are you doing here? What are **you** doing here? What are you **doing** here? Or What are you doing **here**? Where would he place the emphasis?

Here is Elijah, just one chapter ago (although I don't know how long 1 chapter is in bible time!!) he had whipped 450 enemy Baal type priests and proved God was God by calling down fire from heaven and lighting the BBQ (Hey read it sometime in 1 Kings 18 or look at last weeks church online) yet even after seeing those miracles he gets scared of Jezabel's threats.

That's where we pick it up this morning.

1 Kings 19:4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, 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." ⁵ Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

Elijah had arrived at a point in his ministry where he had had enough. He felt he had done the job and God wasn't being fair. He felt all alone and isolated. He just wanted to die.

It seems that that is the prophet's lot. We read time and time again in the bible how a man of God is ostracised or persecuted, and it appears they are the only ones to serve God. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea all these guys can identify with Elijah. Even after the bible times we have stories where people stand up for their faith alone, Richard Wurmbrand from Romania, people in Russia and China. Laughed at, persecuted, ridiculed, killed even.

Hey, I've been there, I know what **that** feels like, well not he killed bit, but I can identify with this guy. I've been laughed at for my faith in Jesus, told I was a religious nut or a fruitcake. There are times when I have had enough – thought that no-one was listening. I'm sure any christian has had times when they have had enough - listen up then.

1 Kings 19:5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

1KI 19:7 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." 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.

This angel type dude comes and says eat this you'll need it, but Elijah goes back to sleep. The angel dude wakes him again and says eat this you'll need it. You've got a journey ahead. This is good food, Elijah goes for forty days and forty nights on this stuff. Well, the figures of 40 days and nights could mean a long period of time, but hey this guy is running and this is the type of energy food you need to get away from a Queen like Jezebel.

In 1998 I competed in Ironman 3.8 swim 180k bike ride and 42 k run. I trained hard, got to be fitter than I had ever been and was ready for a big race but I didn't do really all that well – why – I didn't eat enough during the day. I ran out of energy.

To do the big things in life we need energy, to do ministry in life we need God's energy. The application for us here is – use God's provided energy, don't try to use our own – because ours doesn't provide enough go.

God wants to know from Elijah his side of the story, why he had run away. Here is the cool bit, he listens. Even though Elijah is full of it. God always listens. It is as if God is saying “You don't need to be here but since you are I'm interested”

What is it that brings us to this point in life? Why are we here today at this church listening to this sermon? What are you doing here? I think it is a very valid question for us to evaluate.

At different times in our life God asks us: What are we doing in life or with life?

What is your response to Him now? What is my response to Him right now?

1KI 19:11 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?"

I'm deaf, I can't help that, it is a hereditary thing, most of the time I have to wear hearing aids, funnily enough even when I'm playing music. For me, listening is hard, takes hard work, I have to watch people's lips, concentrate on the sounds. I do hear and it is very easy to miss bits of what people say and miss their meaning.

Sometimes I am spiritually deaf too, I lose concentration, don't take notice, basically don't listen to God. Listening to God takes some effort. Listen. It is hard work but basic. Mostly these days that is done by bible reading, if you don't read it you ain't listening. Other times it's through preaching or bible study, you don't take notice you or you don't turn up you ain't listening. We often want God to speak in a miraculous way, but God is already talking and we ain't listening. As I mentioned last week, I think God uses the spectacular when we haven't listened to His voice for us that means when we haven't read the book.

1KI 19:14 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken 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."

1KI 19:15 The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu."

18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

God is amazingly patient. Here Elijah just goes all the way through it again. And God gently answers. Maybe it is not an answer, He gives him a life or a job to do.

Basically, God says go back and do your stuff and by the way there are 7000, faithful people – you are not alone.

The interesting thing about that ½ Marathon was I didn't come last – there were other people just like me. Big blokes and slow blokes, and guys out for a chat, so we did. Chatted and waddled along, at our pace.

It taught me something – My ministry is not with the Steve Monnegetti's or the Eliud Kipchoge of Kenya (He is the world record holder – Interesting side point – the world record for a marathon is 2:101 and that day I did 2:01 for ½ a marathon!!) of this world but with the tail end Charlie's and guess what – It's valid. What was I doing out there in that run? Running. What am I doing here? Listening, getting ready to minister maybe. Our ministry is with people we are called to minister to – those around us, friends and relatives etc.

Ok what's the point of all this, Well, what **are** you doing here? What is it in life God has for you to do? Are you running? Are you listening? What are we doing with our abilities, ministries, with our potential what are we doing with our life – for God?