September 27, 2026
1 Kings 19:1-18
This wasn't supposed to happen. The Spiritual life of God's chosen nation Israel has been hijacked by Queen Jezebel, who had institutionalized Baal worship in Israel, and had hundreds of Baal prophets and priests on government payroll, violently attempted to get rid of all traces of the LORD in Israel, including killing his prophets. The idea was that the LORD is weak, if he's even real, but Baal can send rain, fertility, food, drink, wealth, and if you give him what he wants, usually blood, he'll give you what you want. Elijah was a prophet sent by the LORD to prove that this wasn't true, and Elijah set up this showdown between Baal and the LORD- two altars on Mt. Carmel, two sacrifices, and the Baal followers would pray to him, Elijah would pray to the LORD, and whichever god sent fire down from the sky was truly God. The Lord wins. Elijah sprints to Jezreel, the capital city, because he's certain that now, Ahab and Jezebel HAVE to admit they were wrong! They have proof! And if they wouldn't, people would rise up against them, and the LORD would finally be the God of Israel again, there would be a revival! But that didn't happen. Why not? Why wouldn't Jezebel admit she was wrong about Baal? Because she would have to admit she was wrong. And Jezebel is not interested in truth, or worshiping the true god, or helping her people. She's interested in power, and Elijah is a threat. Why wouldn't people rise up against her? They knew the truth! Maybe, but Jezebel was powerful. They might put their alliance with Tyre and Sidon in jeopardy- which would have been financially inconvenient. Elijah can't believe it. God comes down and proves that he is real and it changes *nothing.*
So he's done. He's done with ministry, he drops off his servant down south because he's done being a prophet. He's also done with *life.* He thought that this miracle would finally bring his people back to God but it didn't work, and if *that* wasn't enough, what would be? He's depressed, confused, overwhelmed, exhausted, *done*.

I imagine some of you today relate to Elijah. Some of you thought that once you started taking God's Word more seriously, he'd help you with your problems and things would get better. And they haven't. Some of you life-long Christians thought that if you just prayed a little harder, worshiped a little more faithfully, God would let that person love you, God would solve *that* issue, if you just had *this* accomplishment, you'd be happy. And you're not. Things are still happening that aren't supposed to happen so you're confused, angry, depressed, and *just…done*. And now you're here in God's house. Well, you're not the first one. Elijah was, too. And here we see God treat him, and he asks him this question: **"What are you doing here, Elijah?"** And as God heals Elijah, we'll see, **1. God Cares. 2. God Corrects.**
1. God Cares. Often, when Christians are struggling like Elijah, we assume that the problem is spiritual and we ask, "How's your prayer life, are you repenting of your sins, are you meditating on the Gospel, are you worshiping regularly?" God doesn't say that here. He doesn't say anything. He touches Elijah. He gives him some bread and water. He lets him sleep. Eventually, God asks him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Why? It's not like God isn't fully aware. God

doesn't ask for his own benefit, but for Elijah's. He listens. And Elijah is profoundly incorrect, but God doesn't correct him right away. He just listens. Why? Because God is the creator of human beings, and he knows how to care for them. Elijah is not just a soul- he has a physical body with physical needs, so he feeds him and lets him sleep. Elijah is a human with relational needs- he's lonely, so an angel attends him and touches him. Elijah is a human with psychological needs- he's got all this frustration and he just needs to talk about it, so God allows him to. Just for a second, marvel with me at the endless, simple wisdom of our God.

One pastor said it like this: you can tell a lot about your religion or worldview based on how they deal with someone like Elijah- depressed, disillusioned, done with life. Some of you are a bit materialistic- you think everything can be solved with a physical solution- eating the right foods, exercising, taking the right supplements and consuming the right medications, relaxings, sleeping right, and all these physical things. But you're not just a physical being. You're also a psychological being- some in our culture are convinced that every issue is based on psychology, and all your issues can be solved by going to therapy, but we aren't *just* psychological/relational creatures, we are also spiritual creatures. We have a lot of Christians perhaps go to church, or only go so often, only watch online, or go, but don't really talk to anyone or make friends. I'm glad you're hearing the Word of God! But let me gently critique: You aren't just a soul. You have a body, mind, psyche, with physical, relational needs. And God's Church is not just designed to be a Spiritual gas station where you come, get your spiritual fill, and then go on your way. There's a reason we have meals together. There's a reason we have fellowship. Christians need Christian friends. They need Christian hugs, Christian tears, Christian breakfasts, Christian coffee sessions, Christian ears to listen to their frustrations, Christian love and friendship. It's very trendy right now to come to church and get spiritual content without investing your time, energy, and love into your Christian family. Don't make that mistake. God has created your body, mind, and soul. Let him care for you through his people.

2. God corrects. At the same time, another modern error is that we should simply listen to the Elijah's in our lives! Don't correct them, don't challenge them, just make them feel heard! That's unbiblical. Elijah needs to be cared for. He also needs to be corrected, and as we see God correct him, I think we'll all stand corrected as well.

God sends Elijah out into the desert for forty days. That probably sounds familiar- Moses and the Israelites were in the desert for forty years, Jesus would be in the desert for forty days- what's the significance? Well, to quote Moses, and Jesus, because man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. God is saying to Elijah, "I, my work, my ministry, my plans do not depend on you. You depend on me." There are times when God has to put us in situations where we simply have no choice but to trust him, where he weakens us and lovingly reminds us that we are not self-sufficient, not self-dependent. God doesn't need you. You need him. First correction. Elijah goes to Mt. Horeb, better known as Mt. Sinai- where

centuries earlier Moses had gone up, and God revealed himself to Moses with his glory, and hid Moses in the cleft of a rock, a cave, and God passed by, it was here that God gave the Law to Moses, this is the place famous for God's terrifying presence. And that's where Elijah goes. Why? Because Elijah thought, his whole life, that God worked in a certain way. And when the fire from the sky didn't work, Elijah's whole world was shaken and he's essentially saying, "You are not the God I thought you were, and I want to find out what kind of God you really are." And God invites him! And he asks, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Boom! "I've been very zealous!" In other words, "I'm doing everything right! I'm doing my job! What are you doing? Don't you even care? It's *your* covenant, *your* rules people are breaking! It's *your* altars they've destroyed, *your preachers* they're slaughtering, and you do *nothing!"* God says, "come out here." And down comes hurricane wind that breaks the rocks, but the Lord was in the wind, the earthquake that splits and shakes the ground, but the Lord was not in the earthquake, the fire that proves God is real and not Baal, but the Lord was not in the fire. Then comes the gentle whisper, the still small voice- there he is. God is not found in the big, flashy, exciting things that we put value on. Sometimes we think that if our churches, our schools, our God is going to be successful, we need big, beautiful buildings- but the Lord is not in big, beautiful buildings. We think we need charismatic, charming pastors or the brightest and smartest thinkers- but the Lord is not in the charming, charismatic, brightest, advanced, humanly impressive. We think we need all this money, but the Lord is not oodles of money. they aren't what change the human heart, what draw people from their idols to their loving God. Not the fire, but the Word. God's Word is the power of what we do here, and it's sufficient. You see, centuries after this, God's Son came into this world and appeared in blinding glory on a different mountain to three of his disciples, and two men who had desired to see God's glory, who had wrestled with God and desperately asked, "what are you doing," who wanted so badly to see God turn the hearts of his people away from their idols back to him, Moses, and Elijah appeared with Christ, and they spoke about his death, and it became clear: The way God would ultimately solve the problem of evil, save his people, make all things new, is not by sending fire, but coming down and enduring the fire of God's wrath in the place of sinners, not to punish, but to forgive, and through that message of Jesus' sacrifice, forgiveness, and eternal joy, friendship, and love, the Gospel, the gentle whisper of Grace, that is how God melts the unbelieving heart, that is how God brings them into his arms. Correction two. Elijah speaks again, and here, God corrects him again. Elijah thinks God doesn't care about all the injustice- and there was a lot of it, Jezebel had killed many of his friends and were responsible for the spiritual destruction of many, many more. God is saying, "I know, Elijah. I know. But I'm going to take care of it my way in my time, not yours." And so Elijah has to anoint Hazael king of Aram and Jehu king over Israel, and the idea is that they would kill Ahab and Jezebel and their followers. Justice. Here's the thing- Hazael is not a believer in God. And Jehu is not what we would call a "pious" person. God uses them anyway. Some of us, me included, get despondent, angry, impatient, done because we've put God in a box. God can only work this way. If I do this, God will do this for me. But maybe your weakness, your sickness, your struggle, your failures, aren't what you think they are. God does justice through Hazael and

Jehu. He saved the world through the torture and execution of an innocent man. He might use your struggles in ways you didn't expect. Your story isn't over. I'm talking to myself right now, but if you benefit from that, that's nice.

Final point. There will always be a remnant. God's church will always survive, even in the darkest, most hopeless times. Elijah was wrong about God not caring, not being present, he was wrong about how God works, but he was ultimately wrong when he said, "I'm the only one left." God said, "No you're not. I reserve 7,000 in Israel whose knees have not bowed to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him." Do you realize what's so beautiful about that? Elijah thought that God needed to send fire to turn back people from Baal, but there were thousands who didn't need it. Families who remained faithful- even at the risk of their lives, and it wasn't the fire. It was the reading of the Word, it was the teaching of prophets much less gifted than Elijah. Some of you are very worried and frustrated- shrinking churches, the rise of secularism, Islam, and less and less Christians. And you think if we just had the right government, the right rulers, the right society, rules in order, things would get better. God doesn't need those things. We don't need those things. Wherever the Word of God is preached, proclaimed, it will be believed, sung, prayed, taught, and spread- Jezebel or no Jezebel. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God and his Church will endure forever. Amen.