

## April 12 Message: Three Words

### 1. Edification/Assurance

You have entered turbulent times. Like all storms, this is loud, threatening, violent, destructive; even cruel. You have at times asked, “Lord, why is this happening? Is it something I have done?” To those whom this word is for, the answer is no, this is something the Lord has done. He has set something in motion in your life – more specifically he has conceived and/or birthed something in you. You may or may not be aware of this. Often when the Lord first moves there is quietness – no or limited announcement. Think of the birth of Jesus. Israel slept. Bethlehem slept. Just a few shepherds heard. Likewise, when Moses was born, no announcement was made.

However, in the heavenly realms, news reached the enemy that the Lord had acted, and hence the enemy reacted. In the case of Moses, Satan incited Pharaoh to order midwives to kill baby boys. Hands that were trained to guard life were ordered to destroy it. When this did not work, Pharaoh ordered baby boys to be drowned in the Nile (Ex 1:15-22). Likewise, after the birth of Jesus, the enemy incited Herod to slaughter young boys in the vicinity of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16-18). (Note that destroying the young is a modus operandi of the enemy). The enemy’s reaction was loud, violent and cruel – a storm. The cries of grieving parents must have been horrible to hear. But Satan could not abort what God had caused to be conceived, nor stop the fullness of God’s plan.

If you believe this word is for you, stay the course, rest in the storm, and nurture what the Lord has conceived/birthed in you. You will in due course see the breakthrough and the fruition. God had the first word, and He will have the last word.

### 2. Healing/Wholeness

This word is for those who have an assurance of salvation and a future hope, but who struggle in day-to-day life. You are not working out the full present reality of what God has worked in you. You understand the gospel and have a future hope. You know that your eternal home is in heaven. However, you are not living in the present fullness of shalom peace. Your soul is weighed down, wounded and tied to the past. Past failures cause regret and guilt. Traumas, remembered or unremembered, scar your soul, even causing nightmares. Betrayals cause a cycle of blame and unforgiveness. There is noise in your conscience, and it is hard to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. You have come into agreement with a lie. The lie that you are unworthy. It is as though deep down you view Jesus’ death on the Cross like a credit card. There is a temporary covering of sin, but the weight of debt remains. But you are worthy – you are worth everything to Jesus. To Him, you are worth the fullness of all He accomplished on the cross. You have been made alive in Him, your debts have been fully paid, and he has granted you the gift of a cleansed conscience and healed soul, set free from all past failures and hurts (Col 2:13-14; Heb 9:14).

The Good Shepherd leads his flock into places of rest, peace and restoration (Psalm 23:1-3). He knows His sheep and is aware when some are restless, irritated or even

tormented by things like flies. In Matthew 12:22-24, Jesus was accused of receiving his powers from the prince of demons, Beelzebul, meaning Lord of Flies. Even the Good Shepherd's sheep can be irritated by 'spiritual flies', especially in those parts of our soul that have not received life, such as where we are in agreement with a lie. What does the Good Shepherd do when His sheep are irritated, even tormented? He anoints their head with oil (Psalm 23:5). Oil soothes, disinfects, protects.

If you believe this word is for you, allow the Good Shepherd to anoint your head with holy oil. Receive by faith. Be soothed, restored, protected and transformed by the renewing of your mind. If feasible, ask a church or small group leader to anoint you with oil as an outward sign of an inner reality. Jesus wants his sheep to enjoy the fullness of His Shalom as a present reality.

### 3. Exhortation/Action

This word is for younger believers at Rangeville. I believe you are living in a critical time and that you are here for such a time as this. The bible tells us that society moves in cycles and that what has been, will be again – there is nothing new under the sun (Ecc 1:9). I shared in the sermon that our generation is similar in many ways to that of around 900 BC when Israel was ruled by King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. They were influencing the society to move further and further away from faith in God to the worship of other 'gods', particularly Baal and Ishtar (Asherah). Jezebel's name means 'Baal Exults' and she was born to also be a priestess of Ishtar. Under her influence society was corrupted. Child sacrifice was common, especially the sacrifice of sons. Ishtar was associated with violence and Jezebel hunted down God's prophets. Those who served in the temple of Ishtar were trans-women. Non-binary identities and those who were gender fluid were honoured in the culture. This Jezebel spirit was growing in influence, corrupting the society and overwhelming God's people like a flood. But 'when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him' (Isaiah 59:19). The Spirit of the Lord raised up Elijah, to turn the tide of the culture of his day and restore worship of the One True God.

By comparison, this is a challenging time for young people in our society. Mental illness, addictions, youth suicide are on the rise. Abortion is normalised. Gender confusion is on the rise and gender fluidity is increasingly acknowledged and respected. This indicates that the same spirit is growing in influence in our society. Believers are not yet being hunted, but the tide is moving against us and Israel's history suggests that this may become a reality.

Let's consider Elijah

- a) His name means Yahweh (the God of the bible) is my God. His words and actions aligned with his name and placed him in direct opposition to Jezebel. Jezebel was aware of this and when threatening Elijah in 1 Kings 19:2 included the phrase, "If you are Elijah, so I am Jezebel". This is in the Septuagint version of the OT.
- b) Elijah was an ordinary man with human weaknesses (James 5:17a)

- c) Elijah was countercultural. He was neither defined nor restricted by the culture. He opposed the direction of the culture and thus became known to the leadership and gained a label 'troubler of Israel'. (1 Kings 18:16-18)
- d) Elijah was a man of devout prayer. He believed that God heard and answered his prayers, and his prayers shook the nation and impacted the environment (James 5:17b)
- e) Elijah was a man of the word and swift to obey God's voice. He was targeted by the enemy, but God protected Him and directed him to a place of safety and rest (1 Kings 17:2-5)
- f) Elijah enjoyed supernatural provision when the 'worldly' system and economy failed. He also enjoyed solitude and time alone with the Lord, learning to discern His Voice (1 Kings 17:5-6).
- g) Elijah was a man of deep faith, who experienced God's miraculous power. In a culture that was killing young males, Elijah was used by God to rescue a mother and her son from starvation through miraculous provision and later to raise her son from the dead (1 Kings 17:8-24). Elijah nourished the young person and restored him to life.
- h) Elijah was single-minded in his faith and would not allow people to compromise by living with one foot in the kingdom of darkness and one foot in the kingdom of God. He challenged people to choose one or the other (1 Kings 18:21). Elijah received his calling from the Lord, set his face like flint and would not compromise (Isaiah 50:7).
- i) Elijah would not worship at a worldly, corrupted altar. He rebuilt the altar of the Lord in the sight of the people. He restored true worship. (1 Kings 18:30).
- j) Elijah brought revival (by fire) in his generation. The people fell before the altar and exclaimed, "The Lord, He is God!". Elijah's name (Yahweh is my God) is prophetic of revival (1 Kings 18:38-39).

Elijah was an ordinary man in an extraordinary time. He was a counter-cultural man of devout prayer, deep faith, solitude and miraculous provision, who moved in the power of the Holy Spirit. He restored true worship to his culture and brought revival.

## Questions

1. Have you noticed through personal experience or in the scriptures that when God acts or sets plans in motion there is often a quietness or lack of 'noise'. The plans He sets in motion are not initially announced to many nor understood by most. In contrast, when the enemy reacts, there is much noise and commotion, violence and grief. Discuss.
2. Read Hebrews 9:6-14. The bible tells us that under the Old Covenant, worshippers did not have a cleansed conscience but those under the New Covenant can have a cleansed conscience.
  - a. How did this change come about?
  - b. Do most believers (according to your observation) live in the reality of a cleansed conscience? If not, what hinders this?
  - c. If you were asked, "What is the full meaning of the 'Good News'", what would you say?
  - d. Do you desire to receive our Lord's anointing? If you have the capacity in your small group, take the opportunity to anoint those who desire this, as an aid to faith and receiving.
3. When you look at the culture around you, what trends do you see? What concerns does this raise for you?
4.
  - a. Young believers – What do you personally think it means to stand as an Elijah in your culture today? Are you willing?
  - b. Older believers – How can you nurture, support, protect and champion the young Elijah's in your church and family? And/or if you are young at heart, how can you be an Elijah?