

## **“Taking Calvary to our Community: The Mountains”**

Text: 1 Kings 19:4-12

Today we begin a summer preaching series prepared around the theme of taking Calvary to the community. In so many ways churches like ours unintentionally assume that the communities around which our church buildings are situated will almost automatically just come to us.

Well, the reality is, this rarely is the case. If we want our community to know that Calvary Baptist Church of Denver is here...if we want our communities to know that we care and want to provide help and hope to folk...then the onus is on us to go to the places where people already are.

Just this week, the funeral director responsible for Bob Baird's memorial service, came into Calvary's office. He came in to express his appreciation for our church staff and volunteers. He indicated that in over 90 percent of the churches he enters to assist with funerals, church folk are not very cooperative and do not go out of their way to be helpful or kind.

He was overwhelmed with the welcome and collegiality he experienced with folk here at Calvary. Upon talking with the man, his name is Roger, upon talking with Roger further...he admitted to me that for most of his adult life he's driven up and down Hampden Avenue to get to and from work. Until this past Friday, never before did he recognize that Calvary sat on the corner of Hampden and Monaco.

Just because we're here doesn't mean people know about us and just because we're here doesn't mean people will come to Calvary.

So...in some fun, creative and thought-provoking ways...Anne and I want to try this summer to get us as a congregation thinking beyond the walls of 6500 East Girard Avenue.

Don't get us wrong...what happens here at our church building is absolutely important...it is significant...it is sacred...and it is GOOD. Weddings, funerals, child dedications, baptisms, faith commitments, interments in the Foot of the Cross Courtyard, study, worship, fellowship, friendships, and opportunities to grow, learn and expand one's faith. So much happens here.

The balance we want and need to strike however...is to remember that while so much happens in our facility...so much ministry and mission and opportunities to be the hands and feet of Christ happens outside of our doors too. And unless we go out to serve...there may not be as many folk who will find us here and who will want to serve alongside of us.

Today...we begin with a text that takes us out...out and up to the mountains. And most of us know that one only needs to stand out on Hampden Avenue, looking west, to see one of our planet's most beautiful landscapes—the Rocky Mountains in all their grandeur.

Biblically speaking...whenever something happens on a mountain top...something significant was taking place. Often...it was on a mountain top that the presence of God was experienced in a new and inspiring way. We see evidence of this in both the Old and New Testaments.

Before us this morning, as read by Randy, is a story that happened not just on one mountain top...but two. As if the ancient writers of First and Second Kings wanted their readers to pay close attention. As if to suggest, if we missed what happened the first time...on the first mountain...pay attention again. The prophet Elijah in our text has gone from Mount Carmel to Mount Horeb. He's gone from success and victory...to fear and struggle.

Success and victory...fear and struggle. Kinda sounds like life...doesn't it? Life is often full of ebbs and flows...it is full of times that are filled with energy, hope and enthusiasm...the birth of a child or grandchild...the completion of a degree...landing a first job...being promoted at work...watching your children graduate and become successful themselves...making it to retirement...and this list can go on and on...

But life also presents us with challenges...challenges that can bring struggle and fear...

We can struggle to make ends meet...we live with fear not knowing what tomorrow will bring...will we have a job or not...can we pay this or that bill...marriage and family relations don't always go the way we'd hope...our health and the aging process we all face doesn't always go as we'd like...fear of failure and the frustrations which come with work and school and living can get us down and wondering if we've made the right decisions and if we've pursued the best of plans...

Elijah went from Mount Carmel where seemingly God acted in a magnificent way...Elijah was on top of not just a mountain...but he was on top of the world...at least for a moment in time...

And then the tables turned...and all of a sudden he became the person pursued...there was a bounty out for his life...and Elijah became fearful...we can imagine he may have been frustrated...he probably second-guessed himself and the calling God had on his life...

By the time he got to Mount Horeb...he didn't have the confidence he had on Mount Carmel...it seems that perhaps Elijah was ready to throw in the towel...he was ready to be done with the work to which he'd been called...

But God was not finished...God still had plans for him to complete...

Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever struggled with why you're doing what you're doing? Have you ever second-guessed yourself and perhaps even God? Have you questioned your own gifts and skills?

In the quiet beauty of the mountains...Elijah seemingly heard and felt God's reassurance for who he was and the gifts he had to share.

I wonder if we...if you...need to take in the beauty of the mountains...the beauty of the outdoors...and to quietly and patiently listen for a divine word that will give you the inspiration necessary to keep on keeping on.

As a church family...let's turn our eyes west...let's look to the Rockies...let's listen together for the inspiration of God's spirit as we seek to be *a Christ-like community that experiences and shares God's love.*

As we seek to take our church to the communities around us...let's be open to new thoughts and ways of ministry...new thoughts and ways that will take us to people and places beyond these pews. And may it be that as we act as the hands and feet of Christ to those beyond 6500...that folk from outside 6500 may just find themselves coming inside wanting to know what it is that brings us hope and purpose.

As we move soon to the table to share in communion...let us remember that Elijah was not the only one who climbed a mountain with a sense of fear and uncertainty...Jesus climbed one too...Jesus climbed Mount Calvary...Jesus we can imagine must have been wondering if he'd made the right decisions and plans...Jesus' prayer at end of his life becomes all the more inspired and significant for me...*not my will [O God] but yours be done.*

As we seek to be a church community for the communities around us...with all of the people that makes them who and how and what they are...let us pray together...*not our will O God but yours be done.* Amen.