**Second Sunday After Pentecost, June 22, 2025**

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene
Ern Warner

1 Kings 19:1-4, (5-7), 8-15a  Psalm 42 and 43  Galatians 3:23-29  Luke 8:26-39

Help us to find comfort for our souls and turn us towards You, that together we might see the glory of the Lord.

When I was young, one of my favorite toys was a kaleidoscope. It was fascinating to look into the scope, twist the end, and see the ever-changing patterns of color. It was a world of beauty and wonder for a child. Today, I have a different kaleidoscope; the media outlets of our world present images and information using dramatic and emotional effects, tailored by algorithms to capture and hold my attention.

In my readings, I have often encountered the word "zeitgeist," which is defined as the spirit or mood of a particular period in history, as reflected in the ideas and beliefs of that time. These moods and spirits can change, much like the colorful patterns within the kaleidoscope, or the tension and unrest carried in today's news.

When I was growing up in Salmon, Idaho, my grandmother had a black-and-white television. Our family would visit her house most Friday evenings, as my father enjoyed watching the Friday night fights. That television provided me a glimpse of the outside world since Salmon is a relatively isolated community; the nearest town, Challis, is 60 miles away. In a way, that TV was like a kaleidoscope, displaying ever-changing images that helped shape my understanding of the world.

It was on that black-and-white television that I caught glimpses of the outside world. On the Ed Sullivan show, I saw Elvis Presley, but only from the waist up. I also witnessed the Beatles make their first televised appearance in the United States, and I couldn't quite understand what all the girls in the audience were screaming about. I regularly saw Walter Cronkite signing off on the news with "That's the way it is." It seemed like a much simpler time. The zeitgeist of our nation appeared much calmer, but perhaps I was isolated enough that I didn't fully know it. Sometimes it would make its presence known, like during the "duck and cover" drills when I, along with my classmates, would hide under our desks with our arms over our heads. We never knew when the siren would sound for a nuclear safety drill, and as children, recess felt far more important. Perhaps, as kids, my classmates and I trusted our parents and teachers, but today, where can we place our trust?

In my coming-of-age years, images of the Vietnam War were being televised; this was a first for our society. Also shown were riots, assassinations of political and cultural leaders, protests against our government, and oppression of people within our nation. The images from the "kaleidoscope" and the mood of our nation seemed to be growing increasingly troubled. This remains the same today. How do our scripture readings today echo what we are going through? How do they point us towards calmer waters?

Just before the Old Testament reading, the Prophet Elijah had contested with four hundred and fifty priests of Baal to demonstrate to the Hebrew people who the true God was. After God answers Elijah with an overwhelming demonstration of power, the Hebrew people turn away from Baal to their true God. Previously, Queen Jezebel had slain prophets of God; now, Elijah participates in the slaying of these priests, who were the favorites of the Queen. Ahab, the king, tells Jezebel what Elijah had done, and Jezebel swears to take Elijah's life. Elijah, upon hearing this threat to his life, flees into the wilderness and eventually comes to Mount Horeb. There he spent the night in a cave, and the word of the Lord came to him saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Elijah explains his fears to the Lord, who tells Elijah to go out and stand on the mountain, for the Lord is about to pass by. Following comes a great wind that splits mountains and breaks rocks, an earthquake that shakes the ground, and a fire that roars across the landscape. We are told the Lord is not in any of these upheavals. Following these upheavals is a sound of sheer silence. Then the Lord asks Elijah again, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Perhaps it is not in the mayhem and upheavals that surround us where God is to be found, but in the silence we can find within ourselves, in the yearnings of our hearts. The Psalmist writes, "As the deer longs for the water-brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God." The Psalmist tells us to put our trust in God so that we may give thanks to Him and find help and rest for our souls. The Psalmist also laments his oppression by his enemies, of being mocked to his face for not being in the presence of God. When we allow the unrest of the world to overwhelm us, we can lose the sense of our connection with God.

There is so much turmoil today generated towards people of different ethnicities within our country, yet in the Epistle, Paul writes, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." If we can accept that all people are one in God's creation, this might help calm some of our unrest.

The Gospel reading tells us of a man who had many demons, who were cast out by Jesus, restoring the man to his right mind. It may be our society has its share of these demons as well. In his book, Mystical Christianity, John Sanford writes that the Greek word "Kosmos," used to describe our world, does not simply mean the earth, but also refers to the spiritual order that prevails among humankind. It sounds remarkably similar to zeitgeist, suggesting that this belief has a long history. Sanford continues, noting that the Kosmos is often in opposition to God's world. He also states that during Jesus' time, there were people who believed that a prevailing spiritual attitude existed that was at odds with God's purposes. Could such an attitude exist in our society today--which demons might be among us? Are there many, like those in the man whom Jesus saved?

In Chapter 10 of Acts, a hungry Peter has a vision in which he sees the heavens open and a large sheet descending from it, containing creatures, reptiles, and birds of all kinds. He is told to get up, kill, and eat, but he tells the Lord that I have never eaten anything profane and unclean. It is then that Peter is told, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." Might the voices of our day be mistaken in what is called profane and unclean?

Additionally, every Sunday, we hear the commandments to love God with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, and all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. When Jesus was

asked, “Who is my neighbor?” He told the story of the good Samaritan, who helped an injured person who was not of his tribe. In fact, the injured man was of a people who were antagonistic toward the Samaritans. Two members of the injured man’s tribe had passed him by, without offering any assistance. Not wanting to be involved seems older than our times. Can we help those in need who may appear different from us?

During his ministry, Jesus frequently withdrew to pray alone. On Mount Horeb, Elijah was shown that God was in the silence, not in the noise and clamor of the world. The kaleidoscope of today spins at an incredible speed, unveiling a dizzying array of chaos that seeks to capture our attention and shape our response to the world. Perhaps when we take the time to step back, unplug ourselves from the kaleidoscope of the world, rest in the silence within ourselves, and listen to the yearnings of our hearts. Perhaps then we can better hear the word of God and help bring good news into troubled times.