

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, MARION, VA

FREAK SHOW

“The Agony of Victory” (Elijah)

February 1, 2015



First United Methodist Church

115 S. Church Street
Marion, Virginia 24354

(276) 783-5194 info@marionfumc.org www.marionfumc.org



*First United Methodist Church
Contemporary Worship Notes
February 1, 2015*

Music In Today's Worship Service

"Manifesto" (The City Harmonic)

"Nothing Is Impossible" (New Life Worship)

"Cornerstone" (Hillsong Live)

"It Is Well" (Bethel Church)

"Holy" (Wedding Day) (The City Harmonic)

Scripture Lessons:

I Kings 19:1-19 page 326 OT

*Sermon "The Agony of Victory" David Woody
(Elijah)*

Today's Worship Helpers:

<p>8:45 Greeter: D.B. & Janet Waddle Ushers: Walter Sprinkle, D.B. Waddle, Norman Brown</p> <p>Altar Guild: Gengie Fisher, Jouette Graham AV/Sound: Bill Ogle, John Saunders, Glenn Wilson & Lauren Wilson</p>	<p>11:00 Greeters: Gengie Fisher, Peggy Fisher Acolytes: Miles Harrington, Jared Dutton Ushers: James McNeil, Head Usher; Jimmy Martin, Amanda Currin Bill Tilson</p> <p>Children's Church: Ginger Moore</p>
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CHURCH STAFF

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**Welcome to
First United Methodist Church!**

We pray that each person who worships in this sanctuary today feels warmly welcomed and blessed.

To know more about the church and its ministries, please contact the church at: 276-783-5194

or Pastor David Woody at 423-791-2857 or woody@marionfumc.org.

Summer Mission Trip 2015

Where are we going next?

Salt Team Meeting: Sunday, Feb 1 - 12:30-1:30p.m.

Very important meeting to decide location of next mission trip! All SALT TEAM MEMBERS and anyone else who wants input *please plan to attend!*

FUMY

First United Methodist Youth

is taking orders for shirts with this logo. We even have a version that adds "alumni" below the design if any of you former FUMY members out there are interested! Money is due when you order and turn around is pretty fast!

Taking orders for Shirts:

- Hoodies = \$29
- Crew Sweatshirts = \$26
- Long sleeve Tee - \$16
- Tee shirts = \$12

If you are interested in purchasing one – please contact Jackie.



2015 Altar Flowers

If you would like to place flowers on the alter in honor or in memory of a loved one, please sign up on the Altar Flower Chart across from the Church Office.

GET READY, KIDS!!!!!!

Get ready to tell the story of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego through awesome music... and LOTS OF FUN!!!! You may even get to play kazoos!



Parents Organizational Meeting: Sunday, Feb. 1 at 4:00 PM in the Choir Room (across from the nursery). We will be going over the details of the show and giving out the rehearsal schedule.

We will also be going over additional information about Camp Ahistadi and VBS 2015.



If you have not completed your 2015 pledge card, please mail it to or drop it off at the church office.

As of January 28, only 67 pledge cards have been received. In 2014 we received a total of 105 pledge cards.

It is very important that we receive these cards in order to help forecast the 2015 budget. There are pledge packets at the side entrance. Thank you for your help.

THIS WEEK AT FUMC

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25 - SATURDAY, JANUARY 31

Today:	8:45 AM	Traditional Service
02-01-15	9:50 AM	Sunday School
	9:50 AM	Contemporary Service
	11:00 AM	Sunday School
	11:00 AM	Traditional Service
	12:30 PM	SALT Team Meeting
	4:00 PM	FUMY
	4:00 PM	"It's Cool In The Furnace"
		Organizational Meeting
	7:00 PM	Communion at Francis Marion Manor
Mon:	5:00 PM	Advanced Handbells
02-02-15	6:15 PM	Beginner Handbells
Tues:	10:00 AM	GriefShare
02-03-15	11:30 AM	Esther Circle - Country Club
	5:30 PM	GriefShare
	5:30 PM	eMinistry Team Meeting
	7:00 PM	Sarah Circle - Deborah Armstrong
	7:00 PM	Scouts
Wed:	8:00 AM	Prayer Breakfast
02-04-15	10:00 AM	Martha Circle - Delores Boehm
	10:00 AM	Virginia Circle - Church Parlor
		Ruth Circle
	3:30 PM	After School Program
	6:30 PM	Choir Practice
Thurs:	11:30 AM	Food & Fellowship
02-05-15	6:00 PM	Stephen Ministry
	6:30 PM	Contemporary Band Rehearsal
	7:00 PM	Deborah Circle - Church Parlor

WINTER WEATHER POLICY FOR HANDBELLS & CHOIR

If Smyth County schools are cancelled due to inclement weather (on a Monday or a Wednesday), there will be NO REHEARSAL that day.

Shrove Tuesday (Fat Tuesday) Pancake Supper



Tuesday, February 17
5:00-6:30pm
Fellowship Hall

Enjoy pancakes,
sausage or bacon
& choice of drink.

Donations will go toward the Youth Summer Mission Trip 2015.

"THE AGONY OF VICTORY"

SERMON BACKGROUND STUDY

REV. DAVID S. WOODY

FEBRUARY 1, 2015

423-791-2857 MOBILE

1 Kings 19:1-19

Have you ever felt worn down, that you'd had enough? Enough struggle, enough confrontation, enough anxiety . . . simply enough. Despite his success at Mt. Carmel, Elijah was ready to die. He was burned out.

What a win. Elijah alone against 450 priests of Baal. The LORD God v. Baal. The crowds gathered, expecting quite a show. And they got it. Yet, in the end, Elijah still faced a determined and evil enemy. He had managed to cow King Ahab, but not his wife, Jezebel. She was more determined than ever to track Elijah down, find him, and kill him.

So Elijah ran and he ran far. Right into the Sinai wilderness, where Moses had run after killing the Egyptian overseer. Elijah had been in the wilderness a single day when he found a shady bush (politely called a "tree" in translation), under which to sit . . . and to die. Elijah told God that he'd had enough. Despite the Mt. Carmel triumph, he asked to die.

But God would not let go. Instead, God sent Elijah an angel, who twice set out food and water for Elijah as he slept. Both times, Elijah woke up and ate, strengthened and encouraged to begin a long journey.

By the end of the story, we are left to conclude that Jonah is pretty much unteachable. God gives him yet another chance to embrace grace, but he doesn't.

For forty days and forty nights, Elijah made his way to the same mountain where Moses had met God at the burning bush and later received the Law. It was called Mt. Horeb (or Mt. Sinai), the mountain of God. There, like Moses,¹ Elijah would meet with God.

When God asks Elijah what he is doing at the mountain, it is clear that Elijah's depression has not passed entirely. He has been zealous for God, but Elijah is certainly not the only prophet left. He is not as alone as he feels. Nonetheless, God tells Elijah "to stand before the LORD," for God is going to pass by him, just as God did for Moses.

Soon there come typical biblical theophanies, i.e., manifestations of God's presence. A powerful wind, an earthquake, and a fire. These are all the traditional language of God's arrival (e.g., see Exodus 19:16 or all of Psalm 29). God is not in them, of course, but they all speak of God's presence. After these theophanies pass, all that is left is the "sound of sheer silence." Yet, in this stillness, the hushed sound, Elijah somehow encounters God.

However, unlike Moses, who emerged from his God-time with a face that shone of God's glory (Exodus 34:29), Elijah seems unchanged! God asks Elijah the same question he asked before passing by and Elijah gives exactly the same answer. So far as Elijah is concerned, this humbling encounter with God hasn't changed things at all.

A KINGDOM DIVIDED – THE BASICS

If you don't understand the basics of Israel's history, the Old Testament can be very confusing. The following may help: The twelve tribes got their first king, Saul, more than a thousand years before Jesus. David took the throne from Saul and passed it on to his son, Solomon, who took the kingdom to its political and economic zenith. He used the wealth to build a great temple in Jerusalem. He expanded the borders of Israel. But Solomon also sowed the seeds of Israel's destruction. Solomon had a thousand wives and concubines, most of whom were foreign. His wives brought the worship of foreign gods into Israel and turned Solomon's own heart away from the LORD God and toward other gods (see 1 Kings 11). Despite the building of the temple, the people would soon abandon their covenant with God. The united kingdom had always struggled under the threat of rebellion and tribal warfare. Toward the end of Solomon's reign, Jeroboam, a leader among the northern tribes, led a rebellion against Solomon. Though Jeroboam was unsuccessful at the time, upon Solomon's death and some unwise decisions by his son and successor, Rehoboam, Jeroboam was able to split the kingdom in two in 921BC. The ten northern tribes followed Jeroboam, who became the first king of the northern kingdom, Israel. The largest Israelite tribe was that of Judah which, with the tribe of Benjamin, constituted the southern kingdom, Judah. Rehoboam was the first king of Judah (1 Kings 11). From 1 Kings 11 forward, the book of Kings traces the history of the two Israelite kingdoms, Israel and Judah, in parallel. The successive kings of each kingdom are named and most got a report card from God! Most got a failing grade; they did what is evil in the sight of God (e.g., see 1 Kings 15:25). Ahab was the worst of the lot. Doing evil in God's sight meant that the king had led the people away from God, to the worship of other gods. Only a few, like Hezekiah, did what was right in God's sight (e.g., 2 Kings 22:1-2), leading the people back to the worship of the one true God.

¹ The writer skillfully draws out numerous parallels between Moses and Elijah: the forty days in the wilderness, the mountain of God, the manifestations of God, the cave, even God's "passing by" of Elijah. See for example, Exodus 33:12-23; 34:33-35. Sometimes, we are tempted to see these God-breathed biblical writings as mere recounting of events, blinding us to their art and even to their meaning.

So, speaking to him for a third time, God tells Elijah, “Go, return to your way.” There might have been no evident change in Elijah, he might still be a burned-out prophet, but God has fed him, rescued him, and now God sends him north to work. He is to anoint not only an Israelite king, but a Gentile king as well. And, most significantly, Elijah is sent to meet his God chosen successor, Elisha.

Burned out but back

Despite the angel’s intervention, Elijah is burned out when he gets to God’s mountain and is still burned out after God’s visit. Yet, God doesn’t let him go, doesn’t give him a pass. I’m sure that if you told Elijah of his future, he wouldn’t have believed it. Elijah would escape death, instead riding directly to heaven in a chariot of fire, drawn by fiery horses, and carried upward by a whirlwind.

Perhaps it is this way for us as well. When we are used up and have had enough, God can see what we cannot, a future still filled with surprising possibilities. Elijah had a comeback alright, but it was God who not only dragged him through it but refused to let go. God wouldn’t let Elijah give up. It is as if God shoved him forward into his future. God still had work for Elijah. And God always has work for us as well, for, like Paul, we are ministers of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:6), bearing witness to the Good News in all that we say and do.

The Story of Elijah and the Big Win

The book of Kings (1 and 2 Kings are a single literary work) is a tragic story of a faithful God pursuing a faithless people. In 869BC, Ahab ascended to the throne of Israel, the northern Israelite kingdom. Though most of the kings before and after Ahab “did evil” in God’s sight, Ahab “did evil in the sight of YHWH (the LORD) more than all who were before him” (1 Kings 16:30). Ahab married Jezebel, a foreigner, and turned to the worship of Baal, the supreme god of the Canaanites. It is here that we meet the prophet Elijah, who intervened in the religious crisis brought on by Ahab and Jezebel. The story of Elijah’s confrontation with Jezebel and with the priests of Baal is one of the great biblical narratives.

When Elijah arrives on the scene in 1 Kings 17, he heads immediately for King Ahab. The first challenge that Elijah lays down before Ahab sets the stage for all that follows. In the arid regions of Palestine, rain was scarce and life-giving. Baal was worshiped as the bringer of rain. Thus, when Elijah promises the Baal-worshiping Ahab a drought, he is saying that Baal is a fraud, that Baal cannot bring rain. Baal cannot give life. Instead, life is YHWH’s alone to give and to take away.

The stories that follow are all stories of the LORD God’s life-giving power. God tells Elijah to flee from Ahab and hide in a ravine, for God has ordered ravens to feed him there. Then, God sends Elijah to see a widow, whom God also instructs to feed Elijah. However, when Elijah arrives, the widow can’t feed herself and her son, much less Elijah. But then, in a surprising display of God’s life-giving power, the widow’s jar of flour and bottle of oil are filled and would not run out. Then, just in case we’ve missed the point, the widow’s son becomes ill and dies. Elijah prays over the boy and God restores him to life. It is all about life, life, and more life.

When God tells Elijah to return to Ahab, Elijah directly challenges the priests of Baal to a contest. It would be YHWH vs. Baal. But the contest is not really a contest at all. In one of the most dramatically told stories in Scripture (told in 1 Kings 18), Baal is a complete no-show, being no more than a figment of the Canaanite spiritual imagination.

On that day, in a spectacular display of God’s power and presence, Elijah showed all those who had ears to hear and eyes to see that the LORD God was not merely the best god on the block, the LORD was the only God, the creator and ruler of all that was, is, or will be.

And after God’s victory? Rain, in huge rushing torrents. Yes, it is YHWH and only YHWH who gives life.

Readings for Reflection

Monday, 2 Samuel 13:1 David’s violence against Bathsheba will now be visited upon his household.

Tuesday, 2 Samuel 14 The story of Absalom’s return from “exile.”

Wednesday, 2 Samuel 15:1-12 After his return home, Absalom gets a chilly reception from King David.

Thursday, 2 Samuel 15:13 –16:14 Absalom’s rebellion is launched and David has to flee Jerusalem.

Friday, 2 Samuel 16:15 –17:29 David’s trusted adviser, Ahithophel, goes over to Absalom.

Saturday, 2 Samuel 18:1 –19:10 David defeats Absalom in battle, but Absalom is murdered by David’s general, Joab, despite David’s explicit orders that Absalom be kept safe. David is overcome by his grief.