

# Life in the Fast Lane – crowding God out!

**[Please note these are unedited preaching notes and are not for publication. They are made available here to aid the deaf community in Christ Church and to be a reference for anyone who found the sermons useful.]**

1. 1 Kings 19:1-18
  
2. Driving DUI in Paris
  - a. The problem – the mad traffic  
**[2 SLIDES: Traffic in Paris]**
  - b. The realisation – the frenetic traffic isn't going to change
  - c. The solution – a change of attitude
  
3. Tonight's talk – *"Life in the Fast Lane – Crowding God out."* At this point in the year – lets stop and do a audit of the year. We get so busy – whether its work, school, our social lives – especially now at Christmas time with parties, shopping, spending, presents, holiday plans. And amidst all that busy-ness – have we been able to make space for God? Or are we just too busy? Is God crowded out of the equation by our busy-ness – or is He there at the centre of it – leading us through it. Do we make space to stop and listen to Him?
  - a. The problem – our lives are filled with chaotic busy-ness
    - we crowd God out with busy schedules and noise
  - b. The realisation – the pace of life around us isn't going to change
  - c. The solution – Like driving DUI in Paris – if I'm not going to get overwhelmed by the tidal wave around me – does my attitude need to change?  
NOT – I can't make a difference in the world around me, BUT – acknowledging that this world is racing at a crazy pace!  
IN FACT – I can only make a difference in the world around me if I learn to filter out some of the distractions and tune into God amidst the noise.
  
4. Pray

5. A look at Elijah's life:

a. The show-down with the prophets of Baal at Mt Carmel

- Your God versus my God
- Elijah's sacrifice burns
- the prophets of Baal slaughtered
- King Ahab tells Queen Jezebel – and she vows to kill Elijah
- Elijah fears for his life

b. Elijah goes on the run

- Now the **PROBLEM DOES NOT** seem to be with God not speaking or showing up. As a child somehow I got it in my mind that this passage was all about how Elijah couldn't hear God's voice and was looking for a big revelation.
- In fact Elijah was hearing God's just fine – in fact 7 times in the course of this story: Elijah hears the voice of God (or an angel, a messenger, from God speaking):

i) v.5 – *“At once an angel touched Elijah and said, ‘Get up and eat!’”* And there before him is the provision of fresh bread and water! He eats it and goes back to sleep. This guy is weary!

ii) v.7 – The angel of the Lord comes back a second time and touches Elijah and says: *“Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.”*

iii) v.9 – The word of the Lord comes to Elijah in the cave of a mountain at Horeb – and God says: *“What are you doing here, Elijah?”* And Elijah basically says: *“Lord I'm hiding – because all hope is lost – your people have forsaken you – and I am the only remaining faithful one – and now they're after me too!”*

iv) v.11 – God says to Elijah: *“Go out and stand on the mountain in my presence – for I am about to pass by.”*

v) v.12 – There is an almighty wind (it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks) – but God was not in that. There was a massive earthquake – but God was not speaking through that. And there was a fire – but we read that God was not in the fire. Finally there is a *“GENTLE WHISPER”* – and THAT causes Elijah to cover his face and he finally goes out of the cave as God had told him to.

vi) v.13 – Then God (we just read ‘a voice’) says: *“What are you doing here*

*Elijah?*” Finally it seems God is getting through to him – and he replies again –  
“Well, Lord I’m zealous for you – but I’m just about the last person who is!  
They’re trying to kill me!”

vii) and v.15 – God shows Elijah the next step of the journey – to appoint a new prophet and a new king.

- So the problem is not a lack of communication from God. But the **PROBLEM DOES** appear to be much more about crowding out God’s voice because of the noise or distractions around him. His problems just seemed too big. In fact its SO bad that he wants to end it all (19:4) – Elijah is on the run and he gets to this point where, we read: *“He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. ‘I have had enough, Lord,’ he said. ‘Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.’* Then he falls asleep – possibly hoping that he will never wake up again!

## 6. So what lessons are in it for us?

- a. What’s really important here is that within this hectic situation, the man of God receives **God-given resources** to keep him going: God gives Elijah power (18:46) and provides him with food for the journey (19:5 & 19:7).

I don’t know if you’re being chased down by the queen who wants your life or if everyone you speak to has turned against you – but Elijah was in a really bad place, he was afraid, and he was fleeing for his life.

And I don’t know what 2008 has looked like for you – but for me it’s been a year where I’ve constantly found myself fighting back busy-ness and noise in order to make space for God – to find places of meaningful encounter with God.

I hear my friends saying it about their work life:

Phone rings endlessly

Constant interruptions

Pressure from all sides

Deadlines to meet

Inbox always full

## Crises

Overwork

Office politics

Paper avalanche

Cramped conditions

Poor lighting

Working through the lunch hour

And I hear voices like my wife's describing a day in the life of a young parent:  
*"Ruth refused to get dressed this morning. She screamed and threw a tantrum until it was time to go to school. When I looked at Nici I realised her dress was back to front and that she was wearing odd socks. Ruth tried to helpfully bring me the milk but dropped it all over the floor. We went out to meet friends but I realised I'd left the nappy bag behind and had to drive all the way home again. Then bang on bath time a phone call from your mother. 40 minutes later we finally sat down to eat."*

Perhaps this is for you...**[SLIDE: Cartoon]**

- Whatever the situation – God longs for us to trust him implicitly! We need to learn to trust God as Jehova Jireh – my provider!

- *'He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak'* (Isaiah 40:29), and provides for the needs of his children: *'Jesus said – Consider the ravens; they do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!'* (Luke 12:24)

b. **God may just have something to say about the situation.**

TWICE God asks him: *"WHAT are you doing here Elijah?!"*

It's almost an exclamation rather than a question.

There goes Elijah hoping that God will put him out of his misery and take away the pain altogether – but God doesn't do that. God actually wants to get the man's attention and speak his plan into this situation.

- SEVEN TIMES God speaks to Elijah!
- do you think that God might have SOMETHING to say about your life at the moment?
- Wouldn't you like to know what God wants for you next? What is the next step on this journey with him? Perhaps he's just waiting for you to stop being busy and ask Him!

c. **The Sound of Silence...**

While we're rushing around hoping for God to speak amidst the noise, the distractions, the craziness of our world – perhaps God just wants to grab our attention – **take us to a quiet place**. And when we're all ears – perhaps only then we're ready to hear what he's got to say.

For Elijah to be still and hear God in the gentle whisper – took a change of attitude.

You see there's no shortage of noise in the world around us – no shortage of distractions that seem to drown out the voice of God from our days.

“According to a sound technician called Bernie Krause, who records nature sounds for film and television, in 1968 – in order to get one hour of natural sound, like no airplanes and no cars, it would take him about 15 hours of recording time. And he was saying that today, to get that same one hour of undisturbed sound, it takes him 2000 hours of recording time.”

- Is prayer a priority in your life? I mean two way – ‘listening’ and ‘crying out’ prayer. Is it something that you WANT to make time for. Not just on your own – but with others. We're part of a community.

- The purpose of prayer goes so much deeper than simply answers and guidance – it is a way to maintain a constant relationship with God the Father and God the Son, through God the Holy Spirit. It is the ‘HOW’ when it comes to living out the intense relationship that Jesus described in John 15:

*“I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest*

*is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.*

- Or are you too busy to hear God's voice?
- Are the noise levels around you too high?

7. Is it possible that you've been searching for God in the winds, the earthquakes and fires, and he's waiting to speak to you in the silence?

*Silence [Nooma Noise]*

## **8. Pray**

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to a people who were struggling in a hectic world:  
*"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*