

The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind.

After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

(1 Kings 19: 11-13)

Stillness Before the Lord

Carolyn and I were in a church service once where God had blessed the congregation with His Presence in the midst of joyous praise and worship. It was a sweet Spirit that arrived on the scene, and many people sensed His presence, including the pastor who announced it from the pulpit, and then continued praise and worship.

The rest of the service was fine, and the pastor preached a good sermon. The pastor had not done anything wrong, necessarily – he did not grieve the Spirit, and he did lift up and honor the Lord. However, Carolyn (who is sensitive to such things) did get a sense that the Spirit wanted to do more with the congregation, and would have done so if the congregation had gone from shouting and dancing to a quiet stillness before God and permitting Him do whatever He liked.

Stillness before God is an essential element to letting the Holy Spirit bring the Body of Christ together. There is a time for dancing and shouting in praise to God (such as King David did in bringing the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem). Joyous celebrations are a feature of Spirit-filled churches, especially in the Pentecostal movement. But sometimes, if not controlled by the Spirit, such celebrations can turn raucous, and become an end to themselves instead of a means to celebrate the Lord. We have been in churches where this has happened, and the pastor's descriptions of this indicate that such behavior is almost an institutional trademark, if you will; "their way" of celebrating God.

Such a view is only getting a small part of the picture. Yes, the Word does say to "enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise" (Psalm 100:4). But such things are only the first step. Entering the Most Holy Place – the throne of God Himself – requires a reverence, a sense that you are in the presence of Someone greater than yourself, Someone Who should be listened to because He knows your needs and desires even before you ask Him.

And it is not a reverence born of fear and dread, but one under-girded by the fact that the One we are so awestruck by loves us. The Word also tells us to be still and know that He is God (Psalm 46:10), and that we are filled with joy in His Presence (Psalm 16:11). The joy that we feel when singing and praising at His gates should never decrease, but only heighten as we approach His throne. It should reflect the anticipation we feel as we come near the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Almighty, Eternal Creator and King of the Universe... who calls us, as believers, His friends.

It is His love, and the joy of that love, that draws all men to the Lord Jesus as we lift Him up. We cannot help but want to come near it. And we must not lose sight of this

love as we present Him to others. Nor should we lose sight of this as we approach Him for the blessing of His presence, and of what He has to tell us once we are there.

After all, how can we hear Him if we are still busy whooping it up?

For the Glory of God and the Lord Jesus Christ
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