Reflection for Monday,

August 7 2023



I’ve done more traveling this summer than I’ve done for many years, so I’ve been reintroduced to the hubbub of airport security lines, planning and deplaning, and waiting in line for luggage, security, and food.

I also realized that memorial services, which I’ve attended with far too much frequency this summer, are often noisy events that involve talking with many people—many of whom a person may or may not know.

This realization hit me with some force as my son Jonah and I flew back from Sweden. Somewhere over the Atlantic, amid the loud hum of the engine, I looked around and thought, “There are just too many people here.”

I climbed over Jonah into the aisle, went to one of the tiny bathrooms in the back of the plane, and latched the door shut. It wasn’t particularly clean. And I tried to reach my arms above me for a stretch, but there wasn’t room for that. Even so, in that cramped and smelly place, what a sense of relief! I was on a plane with several hundred people, thousands of feet above the ocean and, finally, *I was alone*.

Life can be exhausting and overwhelming at times, but it seemed to me that this was an instance in which God’s still small voice led me to a semi-still, very small space where I could grab a moment of (relative) quiet.

II am reminded of 1 Kings 19, in which Elijah is going through a rough time. He has to flee people who are after him, so he runs into the desert where there is first a tremendous wind, then an earthquake, and then a fire. Yikes! The passage tells us that God was not in any of these cataclysmic events—not in the wind or the earthquake or the fire. Only when all that settled did Elijah reunite with God in quiet—in what translates as God meeting Elijah in the “thin silence.”

This reflection is an acknowledgement of the earthquakes and storms that we all encounter in our lives. Perhaps you are living through one right now. And this reflection is also an encouragement and a hope that you will find God in the richest, most restorative quiet—and if not that, then in the thin silence. Even an airplane lavatory will do in a pinch.

In faith,

Elizabeth