



Fear Is Not Our Future

Lessons From Elijah And Elisha

Growth Group Curriculum

January 22, 2023 – 1 Kings 18:20-39; 2 Cor 12:7-9; Joshua 24:14-15

“Who Do You Trust?”

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

God has told Elijah that the three years of drought is coming to an end. The people of Israel gather to see what will happen on Mount Carmel. Elijah challenges the people of God to decide who they are going to follow. In verse 21, he tells them they cannot waver. The word for waver literally means to limp or hobble. The same word is used again in vs. 26, when the prophets of Baal are not dancing, but literally limping or hobbling. The people of Israel have been “limping or hobbling around” because they would not declare their ultimate allegiance to God.

Baal proves to be unable to meet the challenge. Though the prophets go to all sorts of extremes to get his attention, Baal simply does not answer. They cried out, danced around, and cut themselves, but their “god” was silent.

Elijah rebuilds God’s altar and prays. God’s altar had been torn down during the reign of Ahab and it had to be rebuilt. In the rebuilding of the altar Elijah is also teaching a history lesson. The twelve stones remind Israel of Joshua 4, and of God’s faithfulness in bringing them to the Promised Land. The twelve stones point to the faithfulness of God.

Elijah’s prayer is that the people’ hearts will be turned back to God (vs.37). He does not dance around, or yell louder and louder, but simply says Lord answer me so that the people will know you are God. The hearts of the people of Israel had chased after the Baal and betrayed God, but Elijah prayed that they would return to God, and their hearts would be turned to God.

As the fire falls from heaven, the people fall to their knees and recognize God. Fire in the Scriptures reminds us of the presence God. God led the people by a pillar of fire and at Pentecost we read about the tongues of fire that were seen by others. God did show up and once again showed his desire to be with his people, as long as they would turn away from idols and trust Him completely.

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Exploring the Text

1 Kings 18:20-39

²⁰ So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing. ²² Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. ²³ Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. ²⁴ Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.” Then all the people said, “What you say is good.” ²⁵ Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” ²⁶ So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. ²⁷ At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” ²⁸ So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. ²⁹ Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention. ³⁰ Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down. ³¹ Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” ³² With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs^[a] of seed. ³³ He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.” ³⁴ “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again. “Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. ³⁵ The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. ³⁶ At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. ³⁷ Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. ³⁹ When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!”

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

⁷ Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

Joshua 24:14-15

¹⁴ “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

1. As you read the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, in 1 Kings 18:20-39, what lessons do you think we can learn from Elijah’s experience on Mount Carmel?



2. Pastor Paul quoted Tim Keller as saying that an idol is “anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.” What do you see as some of the most common idols in our culture today?
3. How can we recognize what is of prime importance in our lives? How do we recognize when we may be subconsciously choosing to create an idol rather than worshiping God?
4. The title of the sermon was “Who Do You Trust?” What does it mean to trust someone?
5. Do you have a favorite Bible verse about trusting God?
6. John Calvin is quoted as saying: “The human heart is a perpetual idol factory?” What is the relationship between trust and idolatry?
7. Why do you think it is so difficult for us to trust in God completely? Why do we “waver” in putting God first in our lives and how does this open the door for us to create idols?
8. How can we learn to trust God completely?
9. Pastor Paul told us that we must first recognize to whom/what we are giving our allegiance and that, secondly, we must make a conscious choice each day to put God first in our lives. Why is it necessary for us to make this a conscious daily activity? What can you do to focus yourself on making this choice each day?

