

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Marlin Rempfer

Lent 4
Wednesday, March 17, 2021
7:00 PM

“Mt. Carmel”

1 Kings 18

So far this Lenten season we have been to Mount Ararat, Mount Moriah, Mount Sinai and Mount Pisgah. Each and every mountain has shown us our need for Mount Calvary.

Tonight we climb Mount Carmel. The story is recorded for us in 1 Kings 18. We will read various verses throughout the sermon.

The context is Elijah, at God's command, told Ahab that there would be no rain except by God's word. This was due in large part to the fact that they worshiped and served Baal, a false God. Baal was the fertility God. He was also called the Lord of Rain and Dew, the two forms of moisture that were indispensable for fertile soil in Canaan. Elijah, having made that proclamation was led to live by the brook Cherith where he was fed by ravens.

Elijah was willing to confront the King and Queen for their idolatry. Here we can make a connection with the cross. God's assignments are not always comfortable but they are critical.

After three years God sent Elijah back to speak to King Ahab. V. 17 -19 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel? And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals. Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel and the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table." So they gather at Mount Carmel and the first thing we read is: And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. 18:20-21

This highlights two of our sins. The first is the sin of idolatry – worshipping, serving and loving someone or something more than God. The second sin of compromise, the sin of trying to fit in.

Life is full of choices. Some choices are insignificant others effect the direction of our lives. Here Elijah challenges the people of Israel in a way that sounds just like Joshua. Choose this day whom you will serve."

You have a choice you can follow God and God alone or you can follow the world and the world alone. Don't try to embrace them both. James said it this way: "You adulteress people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity toward God. (James 4:4) Daily we are face with many temptations to compromise with the world around us.

The text says, "The people did not answer him a word." This highlights yet another sin our unwillingness to commit. All of sins make clear that Calvary is necessary.

Mount Carmel teaches us that the majority isn't always right. The text talks about 400 prophets of Asherah and 450 prophets of Baal. It speaks only of Elijah. And when Elijah's life is threatened he says to God, "I alone am left." It wasn't true but it felt like it and seemed like it.

How often do we use the excuse, "Everyone else is"? How often do we just go along to get along? How often do we just want to fit in? Are we willing to stand alone?

On Mount Calvary Jesus was willing to stand alone for the many times we failed to do so.

Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox, and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people answered and said, "That is a good idea." (1 Kings 18:22 – 24)

So the prophets of Baal prepared a bull and put it on an altar. They prayed to Baal. In Ugaritic and Hebrew, Baal's is described as the storm god who rides on the clouds. One source said that his arrows supposedly brought forth lightning.

They called upon Baal from morning until noon, saying “O Baal, answer us!” but there was no voice, and no one answered. (18:26)

Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord. He told them to take four jar of water and pour it on the altar. He instructed them to do it three times. He then prayed< “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day, that you are God in Israel, Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that the people may know that you, O Lord are God” (18: 19 – 37)

“Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “the Lord, He is God; the Lord He is God” (18:38 – 39)

Mount Carmel shows us why Mount Calvary was needed. We are a guilty of idolatry. We are a people who are not fully committed to the Lord. We are a people who give into the world and refuse to stand alone.

Thankfully our God used all of His power on Mount Calvary to quench the fire of hell. He did it all to give us life. On Mount Calvary after Jesus died the centurion said, “Truly this was the Son of God.”

We can be confident of our salvation because on Mount Calvary the only true God did what no one else and no false god could do. He removed sin and defeated death.

Seeing the display of love and power on Mount Calvary should lead everyone to say, “The Lord, He is God, the Lord, He is God. Amen.