

## The True God, and the False Prophets

I Kings 18:17-40, June 14, 2015

Trinity Sunday II

Sermon Text; 1 Kings 18:17-40 (KJV):

*“And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.”*

Beloved of the Lord.....Throughout the news media today, on the TV, radio, and especially the internet, it is evident the world is obsessed with the subject of homosexuality and transgenderism. You can't even go to a grocery store today without seeing these offensive pictures of a man who is trying to become a woman. There is a striking parallel in our lesson today between the prophets

of Baal, and the homosexuals and trans genders of our day. The parallel is this, just as the false prophets of Baal mutilated themselves in a desperate attempt to move their god to hear and answer their prayer, so the homosexuals and trans genders mutilate and harm their own body because of the god they believe in. By screaming loudly in our world today for attention, and continually “outing” themselves and making their cause known, they are seeking to justify their religion and behavior in the eyes of the world. By trying to change their own gender by way of operations and hormones, they are abusing and defiling their own bodies in a desperate attempt to silence their guilty conscience. They want to reach some perfect and imagined state of who they would like to be, but what they really need is forgiveness for their sins and peace of conscience. This Jesus only can give. Only the True God can satisfy the soul.

But let us think of all this for a moment with some logical thought. If it is true that their god is the correct god, than their god made them that way. And if their god made them that way, and if that truly is “natural”, why are they trying to change their gender? Wouldn't that be contrary to the will of their god? When a person thus lives in unbelief, they simply cannot identify the True God or know Him at all. They blindly grope about doing this or that work to appease their guilty conscience, yet they never find peace. The changing of gender, or getting all people to accept homosexuality is not going to change their problem. They have defiled both body and soul and they cannot un-defile themselves. But neither can we. Spiritually speaking the heterosexual is just as perverse in the sight of God as the homosexual, in that we have all broken God's laws which forbids us from coveting that which God has forbidden. Nor can we change ourselves. There is no magic switch to discover so that we no longer covet or want what God has forbidden.

Everything changes however, when the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in this world. When we hear and learn of Jesus, we truly do see God in the face of Jesus Christ. Though by our sins we merited all of God's wrath, Jesus came to this world with mercy and truth. The truth was and the truth still is, Jesus is True God and True Man in one undivided and indivisible person. Jesus is our Emmanuel, God with us. For our sake and for our salvation He offered up His own body as a human sacrifice to take away and remove all our sins from God's sight. By the same Jesus removed all of God's wrath, and filled the heart of God with love and forgiveness for all. This means God is not angry with you any more, nor will He condemn you, for Jesus said, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” Today then as we hear more of Elijah and the false prophets of Baal, let us rejoice we do not live in a world of confusion, but by way of forgiveness Jesus is our peace.

I. The challenge of Elijah, a true prophet of the one True God. In Elijah's day, the worship of Baal prevailed in Israel among the Israelites rather than the True God. It was common to worship Baal in the outdoors up in the high places of hilltops. Worship of Baal included animal sacrifices, ritualistic meals, and licentious dances. In these high places there were also chambers for sacred prostitution by male prostitutes and sacred harlots. In like manner Bruce Jenner, Ellen Degenerate, Modern Family and others shows which preach acceptance of homosexuality, these are the homosexual whores and false prophets of Baal today. Countless teenagers and young people will believe their lie, and denying God's Word they will depart from the loving arms of Jesus. Of such Romans one says, “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools....Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.”

Returning now directly to Elijah's challenge, Elijah had challenged King Ahab to gather all the prophets of Baal together at the top of Mt. Carmel, a high place of worship Ahab knew well. When the great day came Elijah spoke to the people saying, “How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow Him.....I even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men.” Notice Elijah was not ashamed to

say he was a true prophet and the others were false. He also showed how wicked it was to partly worship the True God, and partly worship Baal. In like manner we should not have a double or divided heart regarding the Lord our God, the True God of Israel. God's commands we worship Him with all of our heart and soul, and it is evil if we give any of our heart over to idols for "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Likewise if we worship God rightly, and love Him perfectly, we will also perfectly obey His commandments. Jesus Himself said, "The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master." Have we been perfect as Jesus demands? Have we given God our whole heart and obeyed "with all thy might"?

"How long halt ye between two opinions" means we should not be double-minded toward God nor should we be indifferent about what the Bible says. We dare not mix the true Word of God with error. And just as the Israelites were not free to worship Baal even just a little bit in their heart, we are not free to go to and worship at any church which mixes truth with error. And just as there were 450 false prophets verses the one and only Elijah on that mount, so there will always be more churches unfaithful to God's Word, than faithful. This is why we teach against unionism in the Lutheran Church, namely we worship spiritually with any church where error or false doctrine is taught. As God had forbidden the Israelites from worshipping Baal, so we cannot join ourselves even to the smallest of idols, even one false doctrine. God does not allow us to unite our heart even a little bit with Baal, This is why Romans 16:17-18 says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." Our Brief Statement of 1932 explains this well (para. 28): Since God ordained that His Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church, I Peter 4:11; John 8:31-32; I Timothy. 6:3-4, all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church-bodies, Matthew 7:15, to have church-fellowship only with orthodox church-bodies, and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church-bodies, to leave them, Romans 16:17. We repudiate unionism, that is, church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the Church, Romans 16:17; II John 9-10, and involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, II Timothy 2:17-21." This is why if we attend a heterodox church out of necessity, the marriage of a relative, confirmation of a relative, etc., we do not worship with them as if our doctrinal differences do not matter. Naturally we do not judge the person and say there are no Christians there, for the Holy Christian Church is invisible, but we do judge and condemn the false doctrine taught therein, and true worship for Christ prevents and forbids us from worshipping with the erring because only Jesus is the True Prophet of the Church and Jesus said, "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. "

II. The only sacrifice the True God accepts, is that of His only-begotten Son. Returning now to the false prophets who were challenged by Elijah the Bible says "They called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying O Baal hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered." Since Baal was an idol or invention of their heart, and since God did not allow the devil to work a wonder at this time, there was nothing but silence. Even when they began to cut and mutilate themselves, their god didn't hear. What kind of god would be pleased with men who hurt themselves only to get something from God? For this reason self-mutilation or the injuring or starving of self is not an acceptable sacrifice, for it comes from love of self, and it does not earn forgiveness. God needs a much better and higher and holy sacrifice, if He is to hear sinners such as you and me.

But the sacrifice which Jesus achieved for us on the cross, was far different from that of these false prophets because Jesus didn't do this for Himself, but others, even the whole world. And whereas all the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament offered by the Israelites never atoned for sin but were only shadows and fore types, the blood which Jesus shed upon the altar of the cross was different because this was the most holy blood of the Son of God, Jesus our Immanuel. And when we see in the sacrifice of Elijah, the fire of God which so furiously pours out from heaven that it "consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench", the parallel is the complete suffering Jesus endured receiving the punishment of God. For ALL of God's wrath was poured out entirely upon our dear Lord Jesus Christ for our sins, including the sins of all homosexuals, all Muslims, Jews, pagan and heathen, and also ungodly you and me. Jesus suffered the eternal hell of ALL, that ALL MIGHT RECEIVE heaven's eternity.

Measure then and compare in your minds dear Christian, the consumption, or the all-consuming things here. There is only one all-consuming attribute of God which is greater than His wrath against sin, and that is the love of God in His own heart. And so you could say.....though the wrath of God against our sins was so great that it entirely consumed the soul of Christ inwardly with a pain and torment we cannot imagine, the price of our sin, the love which Jesus had in His heart for His heavenly Father AND for the fallen world which had sinned against Him, was even greater. There upon the altar of Christ, where the Son of God offers up Himself as a ransom for our sins: grace quenches hate, water quenches fire, sin, death, and hell are all consumed, and in its place "where sin abounds, grace does much more abound." Knowing the Gospel that all men are forgiven for Jesus' sake, we could speak of an all-consuming hunger in the heart of God Himself, namely God hungers, Jesus hungers for the faith and salvation of all men, and so as long as this world stands His Gospel will be preached. So Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Isn't it then obvious and evident Jesus is only one True Prophet in this Holy Christian Church? Every word He speaks, every word He has spoken is precious in our sight. So we confess "the Holy Scriptures are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian Church must be taken and therefore, too, the sole rule and norm by which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged." (Brief Statement, para. 2.) Thanks be to God through the Holy Scriptures, God tells us we are justified freely through Jesus Christ our Lord. To Him be all glory and praise forever and ever. Amen.