

Sermon Series: “Choosing life by living it God’s Way” — Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—6/6/04

Title: “Is there only one God?”

Text: 1 Kings 18: 16-39

Intro.: Ills.: Opening video “Who is God?” (man on the street video) & Sleepwalking in worship

Theme: When we are called upon to stand up and be counted for the Lord in the crowd, we can always remember that we never stand alone.

Standing up for our God’s EXCLUSIVE honor often is not a politically correct thing to do

- The timing often appears inappropriate (read vss. 16-18)
 1. Relate the story of Elijah and Israel up until this point
 2. In our country Christianity no longer has “*favored status*” but no mean we should sit down and shut our mouths
 3. **Print 2 Timothy 2: 2-4**
- “*Herd mentality*” often rules and overrules the Truth in our society (print/read vss. 19-22)
 4. Many times we will be the SOLE witness for the Lord (vss. 22)
 5. Remember that as Trinitarian-believers, we have God “*on our side*”
 1. *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Rom 8: 31,32*
 6. Don’t forget that the Lord’s “*silent majority*” is still out there (“150”---18: 13; “7000”--19: 18)
- Honestly compare the world’s gods and to our biblically revealed God
 7. Elijah confronted pagan gods of Baal and Asherah — perverted man-made gods of sexual promiscuity and fertility
 8. Although more scientifically correct, the gods of knowledge, things, and philosophy are no less incredibly impotent
 1. **Print and read Romans 1:21-25**
 9. Elijah mocks the inept man-made gods to do anything miraculous, outside of man’s experience (print/read v. 23-29)
 10. Our God, miraculously and in verifiable manner demonstrated himself in Jesus so we can trust in him for eternal life
 1. **Ills.: Ambassador’s Test**
 2. *This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. Jn 17: 3*

Standing up for God’s honor — but doing it in the strength of the Lord

- Before witnessing to the world, do some personal fence mending (print/read vs. 30-31)
 1. Elijah rebuilt the altar of the Lord which had been torn down — a symbol of God’s forgiving grace and mercy
 2. Are these some “*altars to the Lord*” in your life that need rebuilding?
 1. Personal discipleship and devotional disciplines
 2. Family or relationship matters left unresolved/unreconciled
 3. Other “*false altars*” which are getting in the way of rebuilding the Lord’s in your life
- Conduct your witness “*in the name of the Lord*” (print/read vs. 33-35)
 3. Elijah conducted himself in the power of the Lord not on his own cunning/crafty argument
 1. He did not try to argue/reason Israel into believing
 2. **Ills.: Just Tell Who Jesus Is**
 4. Our witness to the true God will be more convincing if we show our trust in his power, might, grace
 1. In terms of our willingness to submit decisions, accept his grace and mercy, trust his leading in dark times
 2. *Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 124:8*
- Let the Lord do the changing of hearts (print/read vs. 36-39)
 5. Often we manipulate and control others’ response and submission to God for our own satisfaction and comfort

1. It would have been a real scary thing for Elijah to trust God to respond with fire (what if He didn't)
2. In trying to bend another's attitude into a begrudging acknowledgment of God, we may ruin them for eternity
6. Elijah's prayer models our submission to God in serving him
 1. **HONOR** His name (*let it be known today that You are God in Israel*)
 2. **ADOPT** a servant attitude to God and others (*let it be known that I am your servant*)
 3. **BE OBEDIENT** to His Word (*done all these things at your command*)
 4. **INTERCEDE** "for" not "about" those to whom you witness (*answer me so that these people know you, O Lord*)
 5. **TRUST** in God to answer (*that you are turning their hearts back again...then fire fell*)
7. **Ills.: the Last Word**

Sleepwalking to Worship

I believe a very large majority of churchgoers are merely unthinking, slumbering worshipers of an unknown God. *Citation: Charles H. Spurgeon in Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 11. Christianity Today, Vol. 40, no. 1.*

Ambassador's Test

When Secretary of State during the Reagan administration, George Shultz kept a large globe in his office. When newly appointed ambassadors had an interview with him and when ambassadors returning from their posts for their first visit with him were leaving his office, Shultz would test them. He would say, "You have to go over the globe and prove to me that you can identify your country." They would go over, spin the globe, and put their finger on the country to which sent--unerringly. When Shultz's old friend and former Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield was appointed ambassador to Japan, even he was put to the test. This time, however, Ambassador Mansfield spun the globe and put his hand on the United States. He said: "That's my country." On June 27, 1993, Shultz related this to Brian Lamb on C-Span's "Booknotes." Said the secretary: "I've told that story, subsequently, to all the ambassadors going out. 'Never forget you're over there in that country, but your country is the United States. You're there to represent us. Take care of our interests and never forget it, and you're representing the best country in the world.'" *Citation: Dr. Wallace Alcorn. From the files of Leadership.*

Just Tell Who Jesus Is

My family and team have gone to over sixty countries declaring the glory of God. When I first went to the Muslim-, Hindu-, and Buddhist-majority nations, I trembled to do the right thing for the glory of God. I talked to a Hindu guru years ago, and he said, "Luis, don't ever use the Western style of arguing, trying to show your religion is better than my religion or your Savior is superior. Just simply tell who Jesus is. Tell of his character. Tell what he's like. Let people do the comparing for themselves." That was great advice. *Citation: Luis Palau, "Go to the Ends of the Earth," Preaching Today, Tape No. 124.*

The Last Word

The story is told of a college chemistry professor who would close his final lecture of the year with the question, "Is there anybody here who believes in prayer? If so, I'm going to ask you to pray that when I drop this flask it won't break." When no one would respond, he would add sarcastically, "All of your prayers and the prayers of your parents and your Sunday School teacher and pastors—all their prayers, nothing, can keep this flask from breaking when I let it go." The end of another year rolled around and the last day of the semester came. The lecture hall was filled with 300 students. As expected, Dr. Lee asked the same question, "Is there anyone here who believes in prayer?" A young man stood up and replied, "I do, Dr. Lee." "Well isn't that interesting," Dr. Lee said. "Now let's all be real reverent while this young man prays." Lifting his eyes toward heaven, the student said, "Dear heavenly Father, for Your honor and the honor of Your servant who puts his trust in You, don't let this flask break. Amen." Dr. Lee took the flask, held it out, and opened his hand. Instead of falling straight down, it hit the toe of the professor's shoe and rolled across the floor—unbroken. The class gave Dr. Lee the hee-haw, and he never asked that question again."

1 Kings 18:13-39

¹³Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred of the LORD'S prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. ¹⁴And now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.' He will kill me!" ¹⁵Elijah said, "As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today." ¹⁶So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. ¹⁷When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" ¹⁸"I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the LORD'S commands and have followed the Baals. ¹⁹Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

²⁰So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹Elijah 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. ²²Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the LORD'S prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. ²³Get two bulls for us. Let them 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. ²⁴Then 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."

²⁵Elijah 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." ²⁶So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. ²⁷At 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." ²⁸So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. ²⁹Midday 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.

³⁰Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which was in ruins. ³¹Elijah 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." ³²With 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 of seed. ³³He 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. ³⁵The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

³⁶At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, 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. ³⁷Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again." ³⁸Then 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. ³⁹When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"

2 Tim. 4:2-4

²Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. ³For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

Romans 1:21-25

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.