

Showdown At Mount Carmel

1 Kings 18:20-46

Introduction

- Preparing for a big event- 1st baseball game
 - Season has been put on hold for two months
 - Finally began practice the first of June
 - We've practiced for two weeks
 - Ready to play
 - Question: Will it rain?
 - Radar
 - Percentages
 - Down pour two hours before the game
 - 1st game got cancelled; now we have to wait due to the weather!
- "God's Messenger: How Elijah Communicated During Uncertain Times"
 - Elijah is experiencing the opposite problem
 - A drought has created a dire situation throughout Israel
 - The culprit of the drought is King's Ahab's worship of Baal
 - Elijah is waiting for God to reveal Himself as the One True God
 - Everything is leading up to this moment
 - Last week, we left off with Elijah delivering a challenge to King Ahab and his prophet's of Baal to a showdown on Mount Carmel
 - Mount Carmel will become the main event as to whether Baal is God or Elijah's Lord is God.
- You never know what you really have until it is tested
 - We can probably all testify to this in some way as we have experienced the challenges posed to us by the Coronavirus.
 - Our patience and faith have both been tested
 - Without any clear picture of the future, we have to trust that God is in control
 - Last sermon series: This is an opportunity for us to bear witness to God's presence as we put our trust in God's promises
- Showdown at Mount Carmel
 - God is going to do what we expect
 - God is going to show up and reveal Himself as the One True God
 - BUT, it is also going to reveal a limp in Israel's faith and force them to make a decision
 - It's the limp in faith that is revealed that I want us to focus on today, because it's quite possible that we all are limping at times in our faith

- We need to become aware of our limp
- If you limp you are compensating for a weakness
- God hasn't called us to limp, but to walk upright in our faith

Limping Between Two Opinions

- 1 Kings 18:20-21
 - What does it mean to "limp"?
 - Something is wrong- twisted ankle, pulled muscle, hip or knee problem, etc.
 - Not functioning properly
 - Compensating for a weakness
 - We know Israel's problem
 - "Israel" by name defines their calling- God's people
 - Origins of the name come from Jacob
 - Awaiting a meeting with his brother Esau
 - After wrestling with the man of God; hip socket put out of joint
 - Genesis 32:27-28, "What is your name? Your name shall not longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed."
 - Jacob, now Israel, has a limp as a reminder of his encounter with God
 - Israel, the Nation, is not limping due to an encounter with God but instead because they have chosen to worship Baal.
 - The question that Elijah asks Israel is not only the main question of this story, but the main point for us to walk away with today.
 - Why are you limping?
 - It is a question that reveals a weakness in Israel's faith, at the core of who they are called to be.
 - The truth is, the people know it. "The people did not answer him (Elijah) a word (1 Kings 18:21)."
 - "Riding the Fence"
 - Whenever you ride the fence you end up compromising because you aren't all in
 - It seems comfortable, but it isn't productive
 - With God, there is no "riding the fence"
 - If you are "riding the fence" then you are walking with a limp
 - If you are limping with God, then there is a weakness in your faith
 - The Showdown at Mount Carmel is not only about God revealing Himself as the One True God, but it is about revealing the weakness in Israel's faith, which forces them to make a decision

- The truth is that we all have weaknesses in our faith-places where we are not completely depend upon God
- Elijah's role as prophet was to make Israel aware of their weakness so that they could draw back to God
- This is what should happen every time we encounter God's Word
 - There should be a showdown that causes us to make a decision
 - Where are we limping?
- **1 Kings 18:22-24**
 - The odds are stacked against Elijah, but Elijah is not the one limping.
 - Now Elijah is in the position to be used by God
 - Let's just be clear that this showdown is not Elijah's doing
 - God is the one providing this opportunity
 - Elijah is in a position to be used by God because of his faithfulness, not arrogance or some desire to prove something for himself.
 - Elijah is in no way perfect, in fact we will discover in the next chapter that Elijah begins to limp in his faith.
 - BUT God has been leading not only the events, but also Elijah for this moment.
 - Elijah has the awareness to recognize the moment, to listen to God, to put his faith entirely in God, because that is what a messenger of God does, even when the odds are stacked against you!

No Answer

- **1 Kings 18:26-29**
 - **"And they limped around the alter that they had made."**
 - Elijah mocks their efforts
 - Key part here: **"there was no voice, no one answered; no one paid attention."**
 - Israel had put their trust in Baal to provide for their crops and wellbeing
 - It's what people did in their culture
 - They were just adopting the practices
 - But those practices were in direct contradiction with their calling
 - As a result, when they prayed there was no answer
- Example of calling my mom who has two phones
 - If I call my mom's house phone and she doesn't answer, then I can be pretty sure that she isn't at home
 - If I call her cell phone and she answers she is usually driving somewhere, eating out, at the grocery store, etc.
 - Sometimes we call God and when we don't get an answer we wonder why
 - It's quite possible that we are calling the wrong line, because God is not there

- God is not answering because he doesn't care, but instead what we are asking for is not God's will
- We might need to adjust our prayers to find out where God is at if we want to get an answer.
- Adjusting our prayers takes a lot of faith, because it requires us to ask for God's will instead of our own.
- There are a lot of people who are limping around in their faith not because they have encountered God like Jacob, but because their faith is weak.
- Don't expect to get an answer from God, if you have already decided what the answer should be
 - That's not faith!
 - That's limping, because you haven't put all of your faith in God to do what God wants to do
- Think about the challenge this showdown poses for Elijah
 - There's a bounty on his head
 - He's one prophet against 950
 - Public opinion has already been decided about Baal vs. God
 - That's the kind of faith that God is asking us to have!

Elijah's Turn

- **1 Kings 18:30-38**
 - Elijah's prayer is different
 - 12 stones assembled for the altar, which represents God's covenant with the people
 - Elijah prays once and God answers
 - Everything has been leading up to this event in which God reveals Himself as the One True God
 - Elijah is ready to seize the moment and be used by God
 - Elijah has complete faith in God
 - Elijah prays and God immediately answers
- I don't think we are surprised by this story. We shouldn't be. Whether you are a Christian or not, it would make logical sense that the Bible would share stories of God overcoming all the odds to exercise power and authority. It is stories like these that define the very character of God.
- Instead what we don't always expect to find in showdowns like this is that we often have a limp in our faith.
 - We don't expect to find that our faith may be inadequate to meet the challenge
 - We don't expect to find that there is some flaw that keeps God from responding

- What might be surprising to us is that in the next chapter (1 Kings 19), Elijah begins to walk with a limp
 - Once King Ahab goes back and reports to Queen Jezebel what Elijah has done, Queen Jezebel begins to hunt down Elijah
 - Elijah is on the run again
 - He is weary and becomes hopeless
 - What does it mean then to be a faithful messenger of God? Could it say something about the journey that Elijah is on?
- *The New Copernicans: Understanding The Millennial Contribution to The Church.* John Seel. Nashville: Harper Collins Christian Publishing, 2018.
 - Our traditional view of evangelism tends to focus on the destination more than on the journey. The journey is where transformation takes place. (Seel, 121)
 - We need to not only point people to the destination (Heaven), but join people where they currently are and walk with them to the destination.
 - This is what we call the work of sanctification
 - Israel as a nation reflects this. They don't just land at their destination and all is right. Instead they journey through mountains and valleys of life and faith. Some days their faith is strong and other times it is not. But they continue the journey. Ultimately, Jesus is revealed as the Savior and faith is transformed. The journey becomes the testimony.
 - Our walk with Jesus, building our relationship with God, is the journey we are on everyday.
 - Titus 3:5-6 (ESV), "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."
 - Philippians 2:12c (ESV), "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."
 - *Amazing Grace*, "I once was lost but now I'm found"
- Personal Testimony
 - Struggle with vision
 - Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV), "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart."
 - Sermon Series: "Keep It Simple"
 - Post Easter: How can God's Word Speak?
 - Reading Books
 - The Pastor In A Secular Age: Ministry to People Who No Longer Need a God. Andrew Root. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2019.
 - Sermon Series: Where is God?

- Experiencing God: How to Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God. Henry T. Blackaby and Claude V. King. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishing, 1994.
- George Muller of Bristol. Arthur T. Pierson.
- Developed a Prayer Journal with 6 prayers
- This is my journey and it has enabled me to grow in my relationship with God, in part because I had to confront a showdown of faith in my life.
- Once the prophets of Baal had a turn, it was now Elijah's turn.
- At some point, it becomes your turn to respond
 - Your showdown to respond to God's Message
 - Acknowledge the limp
 - Turn to God in faith
 - Trust the process in which God will reveal Himself in your life

Conclusion

- Whether you are in a season of drought or flood, there will be a showdown of faith.
 - Waiting on an answer
 - How will you choose to respond?
 - 1 Kings 18:39