

1 Kings 18:20-39

Children's Message:

What is something you get really excited about?

How do you show that excitement? (talk about it, do it, have posters of it, etc.)

We just heard a story about a man named Elijah. Elijah was a prophet – someone who told others about God. Elijah got really excited about God and he showed that excitement by helping other people be excited about God too!

There was some people that didn't believe in God and Elijah wanted to prove to them that God was real and he was powerful! So he called them all together and said, "watch what God can do". And he put an offering up on a table/alter, and then he dumped buckets and buckets of water all over it.

Now, if something is wet, does it start on fire very easily? No. Have you ever tried to start a bonfire after it rained? It doesn't work!

But Elijah knew how powerful God was and that God could start a fire even when the wood was wet. And so Elijah called out to God and God started that fire – a big fire – right there in front of everyone so that all those people who didn't believe in God would believe.

Elijah was really excited about God. Are you really excited about God? How can you show others that you are really excited about God? (sing, dance, care for them, be nice, tell people about God, etc.)

Let's Pray: Dear God, Elijah was excited about you and wanted to help others be excited too. Help us to show our excitement about you too. Thank you for your never ending love and listening. Thank you for always being there for us. You alone are the one true God and we know we can always count on you. In your name we pray, Amen.

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Adult Sermon

Almost 500 years ago, Martin Luther took a stand against the teachings of the Catholic church and in a sense “reformed” it and created the protestant church. (picture). We are a protestant church...a product of Martin Luther’s actions of “protesting” the mainline Catholic church of the time. We are also a Lutheran Church...a name that takes after Martin Luther himself and all that he stood for.

Have you ever heard the story of how Martin Luther got to this place in his life? This place of completely reforming the church as it was? It’s a fascinating story really. Martin Luther wasn’t always a theologian or a pastor. He actually was in school to be a Lawyer! His father wished for him to have his pristine and respectable profession as a lawyer and Luther abided by his father’s wishes, went through years and years of schooling, got his master’s degree and entered into law school.

While in Law School, Luther was on his way home from visiting his parents. He was on horseback, which was the common way of travel at that time, and he encountered a thunderstorm. Lightning everywhere – one struck so close that the pressure threw him from his horse. Martin Luther was terrified. He literally thought this was going to be the end of him. And in that moment, in a desperate cry of help, Martin Luther cried out, “Help! I’ll become a monk if you spare my life”.

Lightening never struck Luther. His life was spared. And Luther came to view his cry for help as a vow he could never break. He left law school, sold his books, and entered the monastery, and became a monk.

How many times have we said to ourselves or shouted out loud, “Lord, give me a sign and I’ll change my ways” ? “Lord, answer this prayer and I promise I’ll go to church every week”. “Lord, show me that you’re real and I promise I’ll stop drinking, or yelling at my kids, or talking behind people’s backs”. “Lord, send a miracle and I promise I’ll never say your name in vain again”.

Luther was desperate to see God, just as we are desperate to see God. We long for proof that God exists and is here and cares.

After the kingdom was divided (as we learned about in last week’s narrative reading), Israel fell into even more troubled times. The land was overtaken by drought and famine. In the north, an Israelite king married a foreign queen and idol worship became the fashion...was even

demanded. At the order of the queen, many of the Lord's prophets were killed. One of those prophets, Elijah, hid in the wilderness to escape capture.

Elijah had been in hiding for over three years when God gave him the task of gathering the followers of the false god Baal at Mount Carmel for a competition designed to prove once and for all the glory of the one true God. With the people gathered on the mountain, Elijah calls out directions for constructing two altars, both with a sacrificial bull on top, but with one caveat: the people shall not create the fire to consume the sacrifice. The believers in Baal will call on their god for their fire, while Elijah will call on the one true God for his. The priests of Baal go first, but no matter how loudly and strongly they call, pray, dance, and sing, no fire appears from Baal. When it is Elijah's turn, he repairs his altar with stones, adds sticks, and then raises the stakes by pouring water over everything — so much water that a moat is formed! Elijah prays for fire from the one true God, and God sends fire that burns everything - the bull, the wood, the stones, even the water! The fire is so great that all that remains is ashes and a group of amazed people.

Amazed and awed by the fire from heaven, the people of Israel fall to the ground and cry out their praises and newfound understanding of the power and the glory of the one true God saying, "The Lord indeed is God! The Lord indeed is God!"

The people fall to the ground and say, "The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God." What would make us do the same thing? What would vindicate our faith that strongly? Have you ever seen such proof that God exists?

We long for proof. We need proof. Elijah and all those who were worshiping the false gods needed proof that the Lord God is the one true God! So I ask you today, where have you seen God at work lately? Have you seen God at work lately? Or are we like the worshipers of Baal — so consumed and so caught up by our other "gods" in life that we can't even see God at work anymore? Are we so consumed by our busy schedules, our over commitments, making sure our children get every experience possible, that we fail to see God's presence anymore?

God gives us proof of His power and His love Every. Single. Day. Are we consumed by this God — this God who promises us forgiveness and strength and grace and love? Or are we consumed by other gods of this world?

On Wednesday during coffee house — the afterschool program that we offer for our jr. high school students - a 3rd grade boy showed up to play football with some of our 8th grade boys. This 3rd grader lives here in the neighborhood somewhere and he has cancer. Our 8th grade boys are raising money for this boy and his family to send him to a Twins or Timberwolves game during the midst of his treatments. They are raising money for this child to have some joy in the midst of a hard time, and while they were meeting with him a week or so ago, they invited him to the church to play football with them after school. And he showed up on Wednesday with a little football in hand. And they brought him an ice cream sandwich for a snack from the

kitchen. And they played football with him. This is where I saw God this week. PROOF that God exists...proof that God loves us, and proof that God uses us to love as a response of that love that we have been shown. Amazing.

Will we allow ourselves be consumed by this God who loves us and cares for us and desperately wants our love and attention back? God is at work in amazing ways. Can you see it? Do you know how much He loves you, cares for you, and is at work in your life?

God was with Elijah and he is with us today. He sent his ONLY son to the cross to die for you. For you! Because that is how much he loves you.

And as followers of Jesus today, we are called to stand firm and remain loyal to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is through our loving actions and compassionate words that the good news of God will be spread so that people will say "The Lord indeed is God!"

Thanks be to God. Amen.