

*So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" "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. Now 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." So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah 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. Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get 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. Then 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." Elijah 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." So 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. At 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." So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday 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. Then 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. Elijah 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." With 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. He 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." "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. At 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. Answer 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." Then 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. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"*

I got on my computer this week and googled the question "Who is God?" And guess what? There was more than one answer. It did not simply say there is one God - the God we know as the only true Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In fact, there were immediately 626,000,000 things to click on with all different kinds of views and opinions. But what does God's Word say? ***"I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols...Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me. I, even I, am the LORD, and apart from me there is no savior"*** (Isaiah 42-43).

Then I also typed in the questions: “*What is truth?*” and, “*What is the way to heaven?*” Once again there were more opinions than I wanted to read. When it came to truth the word “relative” came up a lot. We live in an age where truth is a relative and a subjective thing. In other words, whatever you believe to be true is true for you. As long as you have faith in something, as long as you are sincere and devout, then all religions, all faiths are equal. Those voices will also say that there are many paths, many ways that all lead to the same place. But what does God’s Word say? It says that truth is not a relative but an absolute thing. **“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth” (John 17)**. It does not say there are many ways, many paths to the same place, but only one name under heaven given by which we must be saved. It says that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to God the Father but through Him.

The last question I typed was “*To whom shall I pray?*” While I found some good, solid answers, I was again sad to see many other opinions. People have a variety of ideas about where we can and should take all of our cares. They are seeking answers from all different sources. But what does God’s Word say? **“Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only” (Matthew 4)**. **“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me” (Psalm 50)**.

With all those opinions, differing voices, and ideas about God and faith and religion what will we chose? Will we listen to others or will we hold to the Word of the Lord. Will we join in with our world’s cry for tolerance for all or will we take a stand for the one true God and Savior? Imagine standing on the mountainside this morning with this prophet Elijah whose name means “My God Is the Lord.” Listen to him encourage you to take a stand today on what you believe. Hear the prophet challenge you and me by saying: **“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if (someone or something else) is God, follow him.”** It is my prayer that we come away again confessing not just with our words, but also with our actions this great truth we believe – **The LORD – He is God! The LORD – He is God!**

This powerful, even spectacular event takes place on the high mountain near the Mediterranean Sea called Mt. Carmel. It takes place in the northern kingdom of Israel where on the throne was the worst king yet, which is saying something considering they were all bad. All we need to know about King Ahab is this – **“Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him.”** Ahab’s partner in crime was his very wicked wife Jezebel. She is the one who introduces Israel to the idol Baal. Baal was considered the god who sent rain and caused the crops to grow. Even children were sacrificed to please this one they called Baal. Then there was the sister of Baal, the fertility god Asherah. She was the goddess of passion and they worshipped her with a form of sacred prostitution. Because of such gross idolatries God sent Elijah to speak His Word of truth. He had to flee from Israel for it, but before he left he told Ahab a severe famine would plague all Israel. A fitting punishment for those who worshipped a false god supposed to bring rain don’t you think?

It was three and a half years since it had last rained. There had not even been any dew or mist in the land. Instead of turning back in repentance **“when (Ahab) saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” “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. Now summon the people from all**

*over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel.”* Now we have this awesome showdown. Again picture yourself standing on the mountainside with the people of Israel. **“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him...I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.”** But the people say nothing and the challenge is on.

They agree to both prepare a bull sacrifice and then each would call on their God (god) and the one who answers by fire – he is God! So Elijah allows the 450 prophets of Baal who met him to go first. They take the bull and prepare 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.** For hours they cry out to this god called Baal, but he doesn’t hear them. They get no answer. **“So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday 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.”** What was the problem here? Where all of these 450 prophets not sincere enough? Where they not devout? They even cut themselves til their blood flowed for crying out loud! They cried out frantically.

We know why nothing happened, don’t we? They prayed to an idol which is no god at all. They put their faith in something that could not help them, something that did not even exist. Elijah, in the middle of it all, acted in a way that would be considered a “no no” in our politically correct age. **“At 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.”** Elijah mocks them. He even teases them a little. He tells them maybe their god is sleeping or away on business. Please understand I’m not saying we are to mock others who worship falsely, but Elijah wants to make a point, doesn’t he? We want to do the same. God’s Word is truth! How foolish to worship idols – they are powerless to even answer!

**“Then 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. Elijah 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." With 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. He 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." "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. At 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. Answer 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." Then 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. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!"**

Elijah may have stood on that mountain all alone. He may have been outnumbered. But he was not outmatched! You see, when your God is the LORD – Yahweh – the unchanging I am, the all powerful Creator and Sustainer of the universe... Yes when your God is the LORD you are never alone, you are never outmatched, you cannot be defeated. And as the crowd of people, those wandering sheep of Israel, and the false prophets, those vicious wolves... as they watched the fire fall from above and destroy the sacrifice and the altar... you can see it, can't you, their mouths hanging open? The fear and amazement spreading through the crowd? And then the whispers and murmurs... growing louder and louder as the people become one voice and acknowledge both their sins and their Savior in one confession: The LORD – He is God! The LORD – He is God.

What does this account mean for us who worship the one true God, know His Word is truth and Jesus is the only way to heaven, and already take all our prayers to Him like Elijah did? First of all, I pray it is a warning to us. Israel too at one time knew the only God that saves. We might not hear of Baal today, but new idols have taken Baal's place – idols such as “pleasure, convenience, money, and power.” Who can think that we will never waver with so many other opinions and lies being thrown our way? How many times have we already sinned by putting other things ahead of the Lord and His Word in our hearts!

But even more important today I pray we too come away again with our mouths hanging open in awe confessing the Lord – He is God! We have even more reason to shout it. We have witnessed a greater event than God sending fire from heaven to lick up the sacrifice of a bull. He sent us His Son to be our Sacrifice. He placed all the fire and fury of His holy wrath for our sins on Jesus. On the cross, Jesus was sacrificed for you and me so that all our idolatry, all our sins, could be forgiven. We have witnessed something more amazing than a miracle sent from the sky. We see our Savior rise from His grave to live again and promise us that we too will live forever in heaven. We have a LORD who delivers – even from death and hell. This is a very important thing to remember. God's Word does not tell us Jesus shows us the way. Jesus is the way – the only way! He didn't come to help us discover truth. Jesus is the truth! Jesus isn't just a model for our life. Jesus came from heaven to bring life to us. He is the life! As Peter writes in our epistle this morning – ***“those who put their trust in Him will never be put to shame.”*** So like Elijah, may we take our stand and with our hearts, hands, and voices proclaim the eternal truth to all - ***“The LORD--he is God! The LORD--he is God!”*** Amen.