



Sermon Text: 1 Kings 18:1-40

Sermon Date: March 10, 2019

In our text on Sunday, the real God of Israel stood up for His people to see. Publically and emphatically, Yahweh exposes Baal as a worthless idol while demonstrating His power, goodness, and grace. We walked through our passage in 4 stages.

THE SETUP FOR THE SHOWDOWN

Our text opens with God commanding Elijah to show himself to Ahab because God will soon send rain. After 3 ½ years of drought, the land of Samaria is decimated, yet Ahab's heart remains stubbornly hard. In this section, Ahab is contrasted with Obadiah. While Obadiah sought to save 100 of God's prophets from slaughter, Ahab is only concerned to save some property. While Obadiah bows respectfully when Elijah appears, Ahab blames Elijah for Israel's trouble. A divine showdown is needed before the Lord sends rain, so that when the rain comes, no one in their right mind will conclude that Baal is responsible.

THE SILENCE OF THE SHOWDOWN

The challenge is simple: a sacrifice will be prepared for both Baal and Yahweh, and whichever one answers by sending fire to consume the offering, that one is truly God. Yet as the showdown begins, the theme of silence emerges.

- **The silence of God's people.** First, we see the silence of God's people. When Elijah challenges the people to make up their mind and devote their lives to the real God—either Yahweh or Baal—they “*did not answer him a word.*” They don't want to make a commitment.
- **The silence of the people's god.** Then, the author emphasizes the silence of Baal. All morning and into the afternoon, Baal's prophets frantically seek his attention. They cry and dance and cut themselves, but there is no response. Their sincere faith is met only with silence. There is no answer because there is no answerer; Baal is not real.

THE LORD SHOWS UP AT THE SHOWDOWN

In contrast to this, Yahweh shows up dramatically. After Elijah repairs the altar of the Lord and drenches it with water (to further stack the odds against Yahweh) he then prays for God to answer. No dancing, no drama, no theatrics. And God answers with fire that consumes the offering, the wood, the stones, the dust, and the water. Yahweh is the God who answered by fire. The real God stood up.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SHOWDOWN

Pastor Justin then highlighted four important truths about God this showdown revealed.

- **The Real God.** Quite clearly, Yahweh is the real God. When the smoke clears, we find the people of Israel on their faces in terrified awe declaring, “The Lord, he is God.”
- **The Gracious God.** The whole spectacle demonstrates God's goodness in pursuing His people. They don't deserve it, but God relentlessly pursues them to turn their hearts back to Him.
- **The Reconciling God.** Elijah calls this bull is a burnt offering, which was the ordained means God made atonement for His people's sin. God not only shows up, He draws near.
- **The Holy God.** While many people would like to strike verse 40 from the record, it is there. And it reminds us that God is holy, an all-consuming fire whose judgment is fierce, yet always fair.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. There is both humor (Elijah ridicules their 'god' in v. 27) and heartbreak (Baal's prophets had sincere faith in a non-existent savior). How can we cultivate a heart that grasps the folly of the world and weeps for it too?
3. What are your immediate feelings about verse 40? Why must we remember that God is Holy?