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St Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th St. SW
Austin, MN, 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels
sermon preached on-
June 30, 2013
6th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Galatians 5:1, 13-25; Luke 9:51-62

Hymns: 41; 430:1-5; 413; 430:8

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 1 Kings 19:14-21

14 And he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

15 Then the Lord said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. 16 Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 17 It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. 18 Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

19 So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?"

21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow Redeemed

INTRO: One's Perspective makes such a difference.

This past week the Supreme Court handed down its decisions on a number of cases. With each decision there was a variety of reactions. It all depended upon which side of the issue a person found themselves. When the court upheld the decision of a California judge against that state's ban on gay marriage, there were many who cheered. Phone calls were promptly made by the California attorney general ordering magistrates and county clerks throughout the state to begin to perform gay marriages. There were also many texts and tweets and emails passed around among conservative and religious groups concerned with what this might mean for those whose consciences were bound by the Word of God. Over all it was seen by these individuals as a sad day for America, and yet another indication of the slide of our society into a moral morass.

Fears were expressed by some that the government would now take steps to pressure religious organizations to officiate over gay marriages or suffer the consequences of the government's displeasure. One wonders, "Where will it all end?" The evil in this world seems to be prevailing over all that is right and good! One fears for our fellow Christians, that they might be unduly influenced by the propaganda of the world, and begin to cave in to the influence of evil. Surely many already have experienced the name calling and accusations of being bigots and hatemongers!

Where will it end? As children of God we know what we say is right and according to God's Word. Many within politically conservative circles claim to be -

Theme: Maintaining a Christian World View.

But what exactly does that mean? There are many who make the claim that they have the Lord on their side of these moral issues. To better understand a Christian world view let us go back in time to before the term Christian was in use, back to the time of the prophet Elijah, who lived in a society that was even more hostile to the truth of God and the messengers of God's truth than the world we live in today. From Elijah's example we shall learn the importance of -

I. Rejecting the False Perspective of Our Own Flesh.

The events preceding our text were so powerful and dramatic Elijah couldn't help but feel that finally everything was going to turn around for the good. They had just had the great face-off on Mt. Carmel with Elijah on the side of the Lord with the 450 prophets of Baal on the other side. The prophets of Baal had presented their sacrifice and made ardent supplication to Baal to ignite the sacrifice, but of course, even after hours of frantic prayer, nothing happened. Elijah had repeatedly doused the sacrifice he presented to the Lord with water, and then his one simple prayer was answered by the Lord with fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifice and the altar, and all the water in the ditch Elijah had dug surrounding the altar. With the support of the people he had executed those prophets of Baal. Turning once again to the Lord Elijah had prayed for the end of the drought which had afflicted the land for over three years. As soon as a small cloud appeared on the horizon Elijah had warned King Ahab to run for home on his chariot before the torrential rain arrived. Again the power of the true God was displayed in a manner all could comprehend. Elijah had to feel that finally, after all the difficult years of serving as a prophet to the northern Kingdom of Israel headway had been made for the cause of righteousness.

But this euphoria didn't even last out the day! Wicked Queen Jezebel was not at all deterred by the events of the day in carrying on with her reign of terror. Earlier she had killed so many of the prophets of the Lord, along with the "sons of the

prophets” or the students who had come to study with the prophets to learn the truth about God. After she learned of the death of the prophets of Baal she swore that Elijah would be as dead as her precious prophets were before the end of the next day. Elijah quickly found himself without any support. He ran away to hide, and then prayed that the Lord end his life. Elijah could see no point in going on. It was then that the Lord fortified Elijah with food, and sent him on a long journey to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the Lord appeared to Elijah in the still small voice that contained all the power and glory of God. And yet Elijah persisted in his dismal view of events. Much is revealed by the opening words of our text.

1 Kings 19:14 And he said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”

We might easily react sympathetically, “Who could blame him? Who wouldn’t be discouraged after an incident like that?” But this flow of discouraging words didn’t come from faith. Elijah knew good from evil, and he knew that the people should serve the Lord and Him only. In spite of this Elijah had lost his **faith based “world view.”** He understood what things were like according to his reason. He saw how things were going according to his physical sight, but not according to faith, not according to the words and promises of God.

There’s the lesson for us. We watch the news, and it nearly turns our stomachs. We see the powers of evil asserting themselves, and oppressing the children of God, and persecuting those who speak the truth in love, and stand up for righteousness in society. Our flesh would lead us to believe that the forces of evil are winning, and that soon all shall be lost! In spite of our prayers for the advancement of the gospel, and our prayers for our nation, we are tripped up by our human perception of events. We are not seeing the picture of human endeavor with the eyes of faith, with the assurance of the words and promises of God. We doubt. We despair. We are ready to confess with Elijah, “**I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.**” That is **not** a Christian world view. That is a weak view coming from our

sinful flesh which constantly challenges the words and promises of God!

If we are to maintain a Christian world view we need to proceed into life -

II. Remembering that the Lord Rules.

He controls the course of human events with His divine authority. Our flesh says, “No He doesn’t.” God revealed to Elijah that He places rulers on thrones to serve His purposes.

1 Kings 19: 15-17 Then the Lord said to him: “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. 16 Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 17 It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill.

We see people in positions of power and authority that we don’t agree with, with whom we couldn’t possibly agree because of their wicked ways, and we forget that God still controls exactly how long they will remain in power, and who it is that shall succeed them, and that each of them shall serve His purpose, in spite of their wickedness. With Elijah God revealed that some of these individuals would be raised to power that they might serve as the Lord’s instruments of judgment. We don’t know the whys and wherefores of God with each of the rulers of this world, but the Lord teaches us that our world view should comprehend that in spite of the troubling things we see and hear on the news, the Lord our God is still in control.

The Lord our God directs the affairs of the world to fulfill His purpose, and we do know His purpose is the spread of the gospel, the advancement of His kingdom here on earth.

This is not always visible to the eye, or heard and perceived by the ear, but the Spirit of our God continues to work in the hearts of people throughout the world as the Gospel of peace in Christ

crucified is proclaimed. The Spirit accomplishes far more than we could ever perceive with our senses. He rules the hearts of His people with His grace. He supports us through the power of the Spirit working with the Gospel. That was what Elijah had to understand was true even among the people of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, even while Ahab and Jezebel reigned. So the Lord revealed to Elijah just how UN-alone he was in Israel.

1 Kings 19: 18 “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

There were thousands that the Lord preserved in the midst of the evil that flourished in Israel. There were thousands that remained absolutely true to the Lord. It remains true for us yet today that we do not know the number of the faithful. The Lord assures us that He knows those who are His, and it is many more than we would ever guess.

This is how it comes about that the mission work that is done even by our small church body with our meager budget has accomplished so much. It is not by the high standard of performance that is found in our missionaries, although I believe that to be a true evaluation of their work. No, the blessings we see come because of the power of the Spirit working through the Word which we are privileged to share with others. It is through the Word that the Spirit keeps us in true faith. Apart from the Word the Spirit doesn't work. Apart from the Word souls are placed in jeopardy. So we praise God for bringing us His Word in its truth and purity, and for working faith in our hearts that we might know Jesus as Lord and Savior! This work of the Spirit shall continue to prosper according to the Lord's will until the end of the world! **That is the Christian's world view!**

The Christian's world view also comprehends our place in the world and our role in the Kingdom of God, -

III. Responding to The Lord's Call to Serve Him in this World.

The first part of the Lord's directive to Elijah was fulfilled by the calling of Elisha to be Elijah's successor. Elijah found Elisha out working the fields. The fact that there were a total of twelve yoke of oxen plowing the family fields indicates that Elisha was enjoying a prosperous life. We see how Elisha said his goodbyes to family and household. He did it in a way that glorified the Lord and also made a bold statement of how he was turning away from the prosperous life he had up to that point that he might follow after Elijah as his student and intern, learning the job. He slaughtered the oxen, and presented the meat to the people to eat. He had no further need of these beasts of burden. From that point onward his life was about the Lord and serving God by faithfully delivering His message to the people.

This isn't a lesson reserved for those of us that are called to be full time servants of the Word. There is a lesson to be found here for all of us about our world view, and why it is that we are here on the face of this earth. It isn't to be about accumulating the wealth and treasure and pleasure that this world has to offer. It isn't about worldly success, and power, and wealth. All these things shall pass away. All these things **“moth and rust corrupt and thieves break in and steal”** (Matthew 6:19). Our life is to be about seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, knowing that the Lord shall add on any and all needed blessings from the wealth of this world as He sees that they are for our good and blessing (Matthew 6:33). We are here for one divine reason, that by our lives we might show the Lord's glory. We are here on earth so that others, by our good works, might understand the power the Lord in our lives. We are here so that the testimony of our lips might join together with the testimony of our lives, and others will learn of Jesus as Lord and Savior, and the Spirit shall open their hearts to believe.

This is our calling. The Lord would have us **“proclaim the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light”** (1 Peter 2:9). Let us not be deceived by the attraction of riches. Let us not be distracted by the busyness of life, or deterred by the ambition to succeed on the world's terms. Let us, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit maintain a Christian world-view. Don't be dismayed by the seeming

advances of evil. The Lord has won the war. The power of Satan has been destroyed. Jesus has overcome the world. Nothing is going to change that. Nothing! Indeed, we may not be able to understand the Lord's ways, for they are far higher than our ways, and our thoughts, (Isaiah 55:8-9) but the Lord reigns. He is in control of all things for the good of His church and the advancement of His Kingdom. He knows us. He has created us, and endowed us with wonderful gifts that we might serve Him and His Church with our gifts and abilities. He has called us to perpetuate the Christian world-view: we shall boldly confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.