

### The Word of God is the Word of Love

God is not a man," so spake Balaam the prophet to Balak the King.

God does not act the way that we act. He does not think the way that we think.

"My ways are not your ways, nor are my thoughts your thoughts," says the Lord.

This is clearly portrayed in our gospel reading (Luke 9:51-62) for today. A Samaritan village refuses Jesus for the pettiest of all reasons, because he was on his way to Jerusalem. And feeling slighted James and John respond with a normal human response. "Let us call down fire from heaven."

They forgot that man's way is not God's way. We also often forget that God's ways are not our ways. Think of every time your spouse has hurt you and response is to turn and cut back with your words. Think of every time you knew the right thing to do but you didn't want to and went looking for an excuse. Think of every time you knew that someone else was wrong and you thought that it was your job to set them straight.

James and John even had a good excuse, they weren't defending themselves they were defending Jesus. We are really good at thinking up a good excuse to do the things we want to do. But Jesus response remains the same, "you do not know what manner of spirit you are of." Their spirit is the spirit of sinful man not God.

James and John not only had a good excuse but even had a good old testament example. After all that is what Elijah did. And indeed they were partially right Elijah did call down fire from heaven. But when we look more closely at the account they are referring to we find that James and John are only half right. Elijah did indeed call down fire from heaven, but afterwards God had the same response to Elijah that he had to James and John. Fortunately for us that is our sermon text for today.

Elijah spent his whole life preaching the word of God. No one really wanted to listen. Finally Elijah thought I'll call down fire from heaven that will show. It worked at least a little. Elijah did call down fire from heaven. But it didn't really change anything. So Elijah ran away into the desert ready to give up. This is where our text picks up.

**1 Kings 19:9-21** <sup>9</sup> And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>10</sup> So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for 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." <sup>11</sup> Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD

passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake; <sup>12</sup> and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. <sup>13</sup> So it was, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice *came* to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup> 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." <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> "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. <sup>17</sup> "It shall be *that* whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. <sup>18</sup> "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> 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?" <sup>21</sup> 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.

So what is the point of this wind, and earthquake and fire?

In the wind we can see the voice of the Lord, but not the voice as we know it. Not the voice of the Good shepherd, but the voice as the angels know it. The voice filled with all power.

**Psalms 77:18** <sup>18</sup> The voice of Your thunder *was* in the whirlwind; The lightnings lit up the world; The earth trembled and shook.

**Jeremiah 10:13** <sup>13</sup> When He utters His voice, *There is* a multitude of waters in the heavens: "And He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He makes lightning for the rain, He brings the wind out of His treasures."

**Ezekiel 1:24** <sup>24</sup> When they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of many waters, like the voice of the Almighty, a tumult like the noise of an army; and when they stood still, they let down their wings.

**Revelation 1:15** <sup>15</sup> His feet *were* like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

Our way is to raise our voice when we do not get our way. Our way is to shout or threat with all the power we have when anyone contradicts us.

Because this is what we would do, therefore we often think if only God would speak from the heavens. If only His voice would thunder from the skies, then indeed people would believe in him.

But God was not in the wind. And if He were to those thunder from the sky people would fear but they would not believe in Him.

Once indeed God did thunder from the sky. When He spoke from Mount Sinai. The people cowered in fear. They begged the Lord not to speak to them but only to speak through Moses.

In the earthquake we can see as a symbol of God's judgment.

**Psalm 18:7** <sup>7</sup> Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry.

**Hebrews 12:26** <sup>26</sup> whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."

This also is the way of men. To quickly repay with judgment any who do us wrong.

And so also men think of God. If God is good why does he allow evil to endure? Why does he allow Hitler and Stalin and so many others? Why allow murders and thieves?

Yet once again we see that we do not know what we are thinking when we think thus. There was a time when God brought his judgment on the earth. In his judgment he wiped out every living thing except Noah and those who were with him in the ark. And the earth shook with his judgment.

Shall we ask God to bring judgment against all evil again? If he did we would surely perish.

But in His love God endures the evil of men, even men like Staling and Hitler, waiting and hoping men will repent. He allows evil to flourish so that evil men might be saved.

In the fire we can see the visible miracles of God.

Fires are often a sign of miracles. Elijah called down fire from heaven. Moses saw a burning bush. There were flames of fire on the heads of the apostle at Pentecost.

Once again we see the mind of man, which thinks if I can show great miracles then people will believe. And so there are many churches that think this will also be the way to spread the gospel. Speak in tongues and healing.

But it did not work for Elijah, he called down fire from heaven, yet the next day everything went back to normal. It was a good show but it did not change the hearts of the people.

And that is exactly the problem with miracles. For they show God's power but that is it. And what is that? Perhaps they can prove that God is and that He is powerful, but they teach nothing of His love.

And so God comes not in thunderous voice, or in the law, or judgment, or great shows of power. He comes in the still quiet voice. This is the voice of Love. The voice a mother uses to calm her child. This is still the voice which comes to us today in His Word. This is the voice that came to the Samaritans. It is an easy voice to ignore. It is an easy voice to pass over. Because we forget that God is not a man we often think that is not the voice of a God. The voice of a God is one of power.

Elijah called down fire from heaven. James and John wanted to. But in both cases God responded the same way. In place of fire and miracles and thunder, God sends Elijah to anoint Elisha. Instead of calling down fire on the Samaritan village, Jesus calls men to preach the gospel. In both cases God's response is the same in place of fire and thunder He sends men out with the still small voice of His word. He sends out men to preach the Gospel.

Amen