

A reading from 1 Kings (1 Kings 18:20-40) – Week 2 – Weave Us Together

So Ahab summoned everyone in Israel, particularly the prophets, to Mount Carmel. ²¹ Elijah challenged the people: “How long are you going to sit on the fence? If God is the real God, follow him; if it’s Baal, follow him. Make up your minds!” Nobody said a word; nobody made a move.

²²⁻²⁴ Then Elijah said, “I’m the only prophet of God left in Israel; and there are 450 prophets of Baal. Let the Baal prophets bring up two oxen; let them pick one, butcher it, and lay it out on an altar on firewood—but don’t ignite it. I’ll take the other ox, cut it up, and lay it on the wood. But neither will I light the fire. Then you pray to your gods and I’ll pray to God. The god who answers with fire will prove to be, in fact, God.” All the people agreed: “A good plan—do it!”

²⁵ Elijah told the Baal prophets, “Choose your ox and prepare it. You go first, you’re the majority. Then pray to your god, but don’t light the fire.”

²⁶ So they took the ox he had given them, prepared it for the altar, then prayed to Baal. They prayed all morning long, “O Baal, answer us!” But nothing happened—not so much as a whisper of breeze. Desperate, they jumped and stomped on the altar they had made.

²⁷⁻²⁸ By noon, Elijah had started making fun of them, taunting, “Call a little louder—he is a god, after all. Maybe he’s off meditating somewhere or other, or maybe he’s gotten involved in a project, or maybe he’s on vacation. You don’t suppose he’s overslept, do you, and needs to be waked up?” They prayed louder and louder, cutting themselves with swords and knives—a ritual common to them—until they were covered with blood.

²⁹ This went on until well past noon. They used every religious trick and strategy they knew to make something happen on the altar, but nothing happened—not so much as a whisper, not a flicker of response.

³⁰⁻³⁵ Then Elijah told the people, “Enough of that—it’s my turn. Gather around.” And they gathered. He then put the altar back together for by now it was in ruins. Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes of Jacob, the same Jacob to whom God had said, “From now on your name is Israel.” He built the stones into the altar in honor of God. Then Elijah dug a fairly wide trench around the altar. He laid firewood on the altar, cut up the ox, put it on the wood, and said, “Fill four buckets with water and drench both the ox and the firewood.” Then he said, “Do

it again,” and they did it. Then he said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it a third time. The altar was drenched and the trench was filled with water.

³⁶⁻³⁷ When it was time for the sacrifice to be offered, Elijah the prophet came up and prayed, “O God, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, make it known right now that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I’m doing what I’m doing under your orders. Answer me, God; O answer me and reveal to this people that you are God, the true God, and that you are giving these people another chance at repentance.”

³⁸ Immediately the fire of God fell and burned up the offering, the wood, the stones, the dirt, and even the water in the trench. ³⁹ All the people saw it happen and fell on their faces in awed worship, exclaiming, “God is the true God! God is the true God!”

⁴⁰ Elijah told them, “Grab the Baal prophets! Don’t let one get away!”

They grabbed them. Elijah had them taken down to the Brook Kishon and they massacred the lot. The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Reading (John 15:1-6)

15 ¹⁻³ “I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken.

⁴ “Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

⁵⁻⁶ “I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can’t produce a thing. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**