

Bible Recap

I See a Cloud!

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Sermon in a Sentence: God + Me = Victory!

Application: During a God-initiated drought the people were confronted with a choice, continue to live their double-minded life or embrace all that God has for them. In a spectacular display, God sends fire from heaven and they respond with humility, prayer, and repentance. Then God fulfills His word by hearing them, forgiving them, and healing the land.

Me

Dust storm outside of Othello

A few years ago Tiffanney and I were driving to Clarkston to pick up this guy

[IMAGE] Koda (everybody say awwwww)

As we were driving down Hwy 26 we noticed a cloud in the distance. But not just any cloud. As we got closer we could see the winds whipping around and the dust blowing across the road. At first we wondered why traffic ahead of us was slowed to a crawl, and then we entered the main part of the dust storm. We could hardly see the car in front of us!

The ground was thirsty for water.

Tension Set: You might be sitting next to someone who is spiritually thirsty right now. Someone in the middle of a drought. They need to see the rain falling in your life.

We (Exploring the tension)

Are you afraid of stepping into a new season in your life (new school, new family, new job)?

Do you have a person/people in your life who is just toxic? And being around them sucks the joy right out of you? Everything they say is negative. And you're just so tired of it.

Have you ever thought "there must be more to life than this"?

Afraid – Drained – Empty

Ask your neighbor "Do you need a drink?"

Psalm 42: 1-2 (NIV)

¹As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

As we've been making our way through the Bible, I keep seeing this theme pop up.

What is the big picture (sermon in a sentence): **God knows our struggles and wants to meet us where we are, with clear refreshing water to drink.**

Let's look at 1 Kings to see how the people responded to God during a desperate time:

God

Series Recap, Background on Text

Ahab reigned about 100 years after Solomon in the divided Northern Kingdom.

He is the 7th king after Solomon and all of them were evil (one guy only reigned for 7 days).

He "considered it trivial" to worship idols, and started worshipping Baal.

He "did more to provoke God than ALL of the kings before him."

God wants to get this guys attention!

1 Kings 17:1 (NIV)

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

As God promised, He shut off the rain to get their attention. Did it work? 1 Kings 18:1. Not at all

So, God moves from subtle hints to direct confrontation, and this showdown occurs on top of Mt Carmel.

1 Kings 18: 1 (NIV)

After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."

1 Kings 18: 20-24 (NIV)

²⁰So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹Elijah 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.

- The people had a divided allegiance. You can't serve God and money, or power, or likes on Instagram, or the "good life".
- We set these things up as idols in our lives
- How long will you waver between two opinions?
- The people wanted to be called God's children and still enjoy the sensual, fleshly appeal of Baal worship.
- Elijah proposes a test:

22 Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. 23 Get two bulls for us. Let Baal's prophets 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. 24 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."

- Straight forward: We will both take the same risk. You pray to your God, and I'll pray to mine, the god who answers by fire is the one true god.
- Do we have the courage to stand up in front of the crowds and declare our allegiance to God? Or are we still wavering?

V27- Shout louder! Maybe your god is sleeping, or going to the bathroom.

- This mockery shows his fierce indignation at the immoral and cruel idolatry the people had embraced.
- **[IMAGE] Big dog** - Reminds me of the little dog (Chester) in the cartoons, bold to yell and taunt as long as their close to the big dog.
 - When we know God is on our side we have confidence to face life's challenges!

In verses 30-35 he prepares the altar by gathering stones, digging a trench and pouring 4 large jars of water on it. He wanted to remove any doubt that God was doing this. It's not a trick with a magnifying glass. This further shows his trust in God to show up.

What happens next is almost an afterthought. The battle was already won!

[SLIDE] God + Me = Victory!

- And don't say that Elijah didn't do anything. God worked through him.

Elijah knew God was on his side, and if God is for me then who can be against me! Elijah received the word of the Lord all the way back in verse 1. And he trusted and obeyed God

1 Kings 18: 38-39 (NIV)

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”

- The last time this happened was a hundred years ago at the dedication of the temple.
- It would be so nice if God would send fire from heaven every once in a while!
- The people repent and kill the prophets of Baal, this had to feel like a turning point for Israel

Watch what happens:

V39- They fell prostrate and declared their allegiance to God. They humbled themselves, prayed and sought God’s face. Then they removed the evil from their lives.

V40- They were quick to remove the stumbling blocks to their faith in God

1 Kings 18: 42-45 (NIV)

⁴² So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

⁴³ “Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked.

“There is nothing there,” he said.

Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.”

⁴⁴ The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.”

So Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’”

⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

- Elijah prayed persistently. Not one time, but 7 times.
- The healing of the land didn’t come at the moment of their repentance, but it was put in action at that time. Supposing they would not have repented, I don’t think the rain would have come
- Some of you have been waiting and praying for years. Don’t give up! God gives them a sign that the rain is coming in the form of a cloud.
- Have you been waiting for rain? Are you tired, thirsty, stretched thin? I see a cloud!

Transition Story: How is this working in my life?

You

James 5: 17-18 (NIV)

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

- It's easy to think that what he did was super-human, but he was just a regular human (small dog) who trusted God to do what God said He would do.
- But, he DID trust God and allowed God to use him.
- **[SLIDE] God wants to partner with us to see His will accomplished**

Are you thirsty to see God move in your life?

Altar