

**God has done great things for us  
A Sermon by Rev. Frances Savill  
Sunday June 19, 2022**

**Luke 8:26-39 1 Kings 19:1-18**

The Apostle Paul stood before his people, after being imprisoned, beaten, thrown out of cities and synagogues, and with complete confidence says to them:

*"I am convinced that neither death, nor life,  
nor angels, nor rulers,  
nor things present, nor things to come,  
nor power, nor height, nor depth,  
nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God  
in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

How was Paul is able to make that assertion? It is because Paul knew that God's power was greater than any other. God is over all rulers, powers and authorities. God is over the future, all creation, over everything in life, and even over death.

This morning's gospel reading reveals the power of God at work in Jesus. Jesus cast out the demons in a Gerasene man. The man was a Gentile, the demons were cast into a herd of pigs, and you'll, note that Jesus commanded the demons with a word.

But notice the town's people's response. They were afraid and asked Jesus to leave. The demonic powers they could manage... at least sort of... they bound the man in chains, he lived around the tombs, they placed him under guard. They managed the powers of the demons. But they could control neither Jesus nor the greater power that he possessed. So they asked him to leave them. Better the devil they knew, than the holy God who was at work in Jesus.

It seems the people feared what would happen when God moved into town – maybe they were afraid that Jesus would cast out the evil in their lives. They did not trust this great power that was let loose in their midst – they did not know of the love of God that came with the great power of God.

When we turn to the story in 1 Kings we read what happens after Elijah faced the 450 prophets of Baal. The story was that Elijah was in a showdown, a kind of BBQ cook off, with the 450 prophets of Baal on one side facing off on one side against the 1 prophet of God, Elijah, on the other side.

The test was which god would answer with fire– Baal or the God of Israel.

And if you know the story, the 450 prophets of Baal yelled and cried, and cut themselves, their blood flowed over the blood of the sacrifice on the altar, but there was no response from their god Baal. Hours of uproar and cries were raised to Baal, but there was no response – no fire to consume the bull sacrificed on the altar.

Then Elijah rebuilt the altar of God that had been torn down, prepared the altar, the wood, the sacrifice, then he soaked it all down with water, so there was no question about what happened. And he prayed simply that God would answer with fire so that the people would know that the Lord was God alone, that Elijah was a faithful prophet of God, and that God would turn the hearts of the people back to him.

The Lord God of Israel sent a consuming fire so great that the whole bull offering, the wood, the water, the stone of altar and the dust of the ground was consumed in the flames. It was a great victory for God. It was a great victory for God's prophet Elijah. The people fell on the prophets of Baal and killed them.

King Ahab went home and told his wife Jezebel all that had happened. Jezebel immediately sent a messenger to Elijah saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also if I do not make your life like the life of one of my prophets (that is dead) by this time tomorrow." Elijah was afraid – understandably so; he got up and fled for his life.

So, if there was any question about who held the power, our scripture this morning makes it clear. It is God who holds the power. Elijah, the strong prophet of God, who faced off in front of the 450 prophets of Baal was on the run, weary, discouraged, and ready to give up. He went a day's journey into the wilderness in hiding, and sat down under a solitary broom tree and asked God that he might die, exhausted, he fell asleep. The man of God was exhausted, fearful, and finished. This exhaustion came at the end of a great victory – Elijah came to the end of himself.

*But God* was not finished. *God* had plans that Elijah had no idea about. *God* fed Elijah, and *God* strengthened Elijah. God led him to a cave and God came to Elijah with a plan.

Elijah thought he was it – but God had plans far greater than Elijah could have imagined. God had two kings for him anoint, a prophet for him call who would be his successor, and there were 7000 knees that had not bowed to Baal.

God's plan was much bigger than Elijah. God's power was much greater than he imagined. And God had just begun.

God revealed his power to Elijah in the windstorm, in the earthquake, in the fire, but God was not in any of them. Then God spoke, that still small voice, and Elijah was remade. God was still on the throne, God was still overall, God would accomplish His plan through his servant Elijah, but also many others.

I don't know what demons you face or what has a hold of you. I don't know just how tired you are from either good things or difficult things. I don't know what the giants are up ahead, or the obstacles in your path. We all have challenges – and as a church we face challenges. And our own resources will not be sufficient for God's work. If we can do it on our own- we're not engaged in God's mission – because God's mission is always bigger, harder, and beyond us.

When we step outside our doors and engage our community- we will face evil, we will face opposition, and even when the power of God is revealed there are some who will prefer the status quo and won't want any part of the transforming power of God.

There are always those who love the darkness who won't come into the light. What they do not know is that the great power of God is fully matched by the great love of God.

I was struck by the stark contrast between the work of God, and the work of the devil. The devil comes only to kill and destroy. The demon possessed man was tormented – and when the demons went into the herd of pigs we see how they immediately self-destruct. Demons destroy. The prophets of Baal cut and hurt themselves in his service.

The man, when he was set free from the demons sat at Jesus' feet, clothed, at peace, wanting to stay by Jesus' side. He was given new life that day – and his mission ever after was to tell of all the amazing things God had done for him.

Elijah, the prophet of God, was cared for by God, and empowered to go and continue serving God's mission. Elijah was not alone. God had the situation well in hand – and God's loving care surrounded Elijah providing for him, so he could carry on as God's servant.

That same power of God is at work in and for us. If God is for us, if God is with us, then what can stand against us? We see the amazing power of God at work for us, and great love of God with us.

And we can say with the Apostle Paul that there is no power that can separate us from the love of God. God is over all – all principalities, all powers, everything in life, and anything in death.

God's love holds us secure, God's power is over all!  
Thanks be to God!