

The Non Answer Answer

1Kings 19:9b-21

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, June 27, 2010

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

We appeal to God on the basis of our righteousness. Even though we are Lutheran we appeal to God on the basis of our righteousness. Even though we are Christians and we are supposed to know better, we appeal to God on the basis of our righteousness. We find David in the Scriptures appealing to God on the basis of his righteousness. We think that it is odd that David does and then we do it ourselves. Even though we know all about being saved by grace through faith, we don't believe it. We believe that we are saved by our goodness. If we believed that we were saved by grace through faith, we would appeal to Christ's righteousness, but we appeal to our own so we must not believe that.

After all, Lord, I am not such a bad person. I have been very zealous for you. I go to church all of the time. I tithe from my salary to Your church so that Your work may be done. Think how Your work would suffer if I did not give to it. I am not like these other people who make a lot of money and then don't give to the church. I am not like these other people who are not generous toward their neighbors. You know about all of the things that I have done for others.

I have been very zealous. I have raised my children correctly. I have not been like these other parents who let their children get away with everything bad. I correct my children. I discipline them. My children have turned out ok. They are not like other children. Other parents who raise their children have children who are involved with drugs, alcohol, porn, the wrong crowd of people. I am not like those parents. I am zealous for You, O Lord.

I have been very zealous for You, O Lord. I want to make sure that everyone hears about Jesus. I invite children in the community to our Sunday School. I invite people to come and hear Your Word. I am friendly to all of the visitors that come to church. I want to make sure that our worship services are attractive and accessible to unbelievers. I am not like these other people who just want the worship service the same all of the time. I am not like these other people who never say hi to a stranger in church. They act like the visitor is not there. I am not like these other people who are rude to the visitors of our congregation. They gossip about them and talk about them and wonder what they are doing there. I have been very zealous for You, O Lord.

I have been very zealous for You, O Lord. I make sure that our congregation's traditions are maintained. I make sure that our fathers' ways and our grandfathers' ways are respected. I care about the history of our congregation. I think that it should be preserved in some fashion. I think that it is good that it is preserved. I am not like these other people who follow the latest fad no matter what it is. I am not like these other people who seem to think that doing it the old way is wrong. I am not like these other people who assume that just because it is new it is good. I have been very zealous for You, O Lord.

I have been very zealous for You, O Lord. I have suffered for You under the attack of other people. Sometimes the other people who attack me because of my loyalty to You are other members of the congregation. Can You believe it that other members, other Christians, would attack me because of my loyalty to You? In spite of their attacks I am still faithful to You and faithful to doing things the right way. In spite of what they have said about me, I am better than them. I do not respond the way that they have responded to me. I do not attack them back. In spite of what they have said, I have continued to do what is right. They don't even care about what is right. They don't care about what the right worship of

You is. They don't even care what the right thing to do is. They don't care about anything except their own selfish ambition. I am zealous for You, Father.

In fact I am the only one who is zealous for You. The whole congregation is worthless. The whole congregation has gone astray. They mean well, but they are not really following You. They talk well, but they do not walk the walk. In fact they are all a bunch of hypocrites. I am the only faithful person here. Look at them all sitting their piously listening to the sermon. Look at them all pretending like they are paying attention. I know how they all live the rest of the week. I see them in town and how they drive and how they talk and how they act. I myself am left by myself. You and me, Lord, it's just You and me, Lord.

Why don't you do something about all of these people down here? Why don't you do something about all of the hypocrites in Your congregation? Why don't You come down here and straighten some of these people out?

Why don't You do something about the parents who do not raise their children properly? Why don't You do something about those parents who ignore or abuse their children? Why don't You do something for impoverished children? Why do children have to go hungry each and every day? Is that the kind of world that You want, O Lord? Well, is it?

Why don't You do something about the inactive members of our congregation? Why don't You do something to get them to come back to worship? Why don't You do something to change their hearts so that they will return and worship You the way that I do? Why don't You do something about these lazy parents who do not bring their children to Sunday School? They act like they don't even care about Your Word. They act like they don't even care whether or not their children learn right from wrong to say nothing of their everlasting salvation in Jesus Christ.

Why don't you do something about the hypocrites around here? It is Your worship. It is Your congregation. Do You really want them to continue to be rude to the visitors who come through our doors? Why don't You shake the members of this congregation up so that they are more friendly? Why don't You shake them up so that they greet people they don't know.

Why don't You do something about these narrow minded people? Don't You want Your Church to adapt and change with the times? Why don't You do something about these people who apostosize from Your Word. Don't You care about the traditions You have set down?

Why don't You do something about the way that these young people dress for church? Don't You even care about the decorum of Your worship? Why don't You do something? Anything would be great.

Why don't You do something about these people who go around calling themselves Christians and yet endorse homosexual behavior like it's ok? Why don't you do something about these ELCA Lutherans who endorse such behavior? Do You really want the public witness of Your Church to include sin? Why don't You do something about all of these liberals in Your Church who are trying to take faith away? Why don't You do something about all of these conservatives in Your Church who are stuck in the dark ages, living 500 years ago with Martin Luther, singing old hymns, practicing old liturgies?

Why don't You do something about the leadership in our nation? None of them know what they are doing! They are crooks, every one of them! They have abandoned the Constitution. They are not godly people any more. They allow crass sin and encourage those who practice it. They are not contributing to the general welfare. They talk about the economy but cannot seem to fix it. They do not fear You. There is no fear of God in the land. Well, what are You going to do about it?

What I would like to see are some miracles of old. That is what I would like to see. I would like to see some dividing of the Red Sea waters. That would show them. Why don't You split Lake Superior right down the middle? Then they would know that there is a God. Why don't You send an earthquake and have the ground open up under the White House and take all of the evil doers away? And while You are at it take the Supreme Court and Capital Hill with You. Why don't You send termites to every ELCA church in the country to teach them a lesson. That tornado that You sent to the assembly hall of the ELCA when they approved homosexual unions was not good enough. It didn't do any good. You are going to have to do better than that.

What we need around here is fire falling from heaven at Your people's prayer. What we need around here is clouds obeying Your command and frightening the unbelievers into faith. What we need around here is a new Moses or a new Elijah. We need someone who can perform a lot of miracles at Your command. That would show those unbelievers. That would show those false prophets. That would show those evil people who oppose You, what's what.

Then they would believe. Then they would get down on their knees and beg You for mercy. Then they would realize that I was right all along in serving You. I have been very zealous for You, Lord Jesus. What are You going to do about it?

And here is the Lord's answer. Are you ready for this? Here it comes. Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts, "I have something else I want you to do."

Did He not hear us? Did He not hear our complaints? Did He not understand the serious ramifications of the things that we have been praying to Him? Did He not understand what is at stake when we say that we want the hypocrites removed from the congregation? Did He not understand what we said when we said that attendance at worship should be higher? Did He not understand how important that it is that parents raise their children in His fear and admonition? Did He not understand how important it is to have good national leadership in both Church and State? Does He not understand how bad it is right now?

And here is the Lord's answer: "Yeah, I understand. Now here are a few things that I would like you to do. Continue to raise your own children. Keep going to work every day. Keep your children in school. Don't worry too much about other people's children. They have their parents. Keep going to worship. Don't worry too much about other people going to worship. Make sure that you keep going. Make sure you vote. Don't worry too much about how other people vote, but you make sure that you go. Be a good citizen. Be a good father or mother. Be a good son or daughter. Be a good teacher. Be a good worker. Be a good listener. Be a good husband. Be a good wife. That is all."

Then God goes on: "Oh, and by the way, I reserve many in your congregation. All who have not strayed from My ways and all who have not forgotten Me. They are better people than you think. They may not look like they believe, but they do. They may not look like they care about Me, but they do. They may look like a bunch of sinners and they are. And they are My people and they are your people. Stay with them. Stick with them. Stay with them because that is where My Son is. That is where Jesus is."

And there is the answer of the Lord. Now, what kind of an answer is that? All of these spiritual disasters are happening around us. They call for big action and big miracles and all God wants us to do is keep on being good parents and students and children and employees and workers and supervisors and landowners and renters! That's it? We need some fire and brimstone around here. We need to revamp and reform and all the Lord wants us to do is to keep worshipping Him and that's it? That's all? Nothing else?

What about My zeal? What about My righteousness? What about all of the extra things that I am doing for the Lord? What about My tithe?

“Well, give what you can. I like Your zeal and Your righteousness. Other people have it also. I like the extra things you do. Don’t forget the things that I have given you to do.”

Will this solve our nation’s problems? Will this solve our congregation’s problems? Will this solve our social ills and bring sin to an end?

The Lord does not say. He reminds me of the times when I was taking a test in school and prayed for the right answers. He did not say then. He does not say when we are tested now. He does not answer beyond what He has already said. It isn’t really an answer to all of the problems that we have, but it is His answer.

Of course, it isn’t so bad when God the Father does this. After all, when His own Son was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, His Son pointed out to Him that all things were possible for Him. He could have let that cup pass from Jesus. He could have let that cup pass from Jesus. Instead the Father answered Jesus with silence. Jesus got the non answer answer. And in that silence Jesus understood that the Father was simply saying, “I have something that I want You to do....”

And that is supposed to solve everything?

He insists, “I have something that I want you to do....”

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.