

SWEETER GETS THE JOURNEY

2 Kings 2:1-14

INTRO: Again, turn your Bibles, or turn them on, to the O.T. Book of 2 Kings. This is the third week in a row that we have been in the book of 2 Kings. And that, not by plan. Two weeks ago I preached from chapter 6 when Elisha and his servant found themselves SURROUNDED, not only by the Aramean army, but also the awesome Army of God. Last week, Bro Kevin Weaver preached an excellent sermon from chapter 4 about the widow and the oil, and how God knows our PROBLEMS, releases our POTENTIAL, and gives us our PROVISIONS. Today, I want us to look at chapter 2. Kevin and I both touched on this epic moment in scripture in our sermons the past two Sundays, but I just couldn't shake the feeling that we should revisit this beautiful narrative and try to glean from it some relevant truths.

Today, I have titled my sermon, SWEETER GETS THE JOURNEY. If you are old enough, then that title will make sense to you. Many gospel groups in the late 60s and early 70s recorded a song by that title. The chorus went...

Sweeter gets the journey everyday,
Serving Jesus really pays.
I get happy in this Heavenly way,
'Cause sweeter gets the Journey every day.

It was 10 years ago that a handful of people started out on a journey together as a faith family that would be known as Christ First Church. 10 years, and God has been so good! I believe I can honestly say, SWEETER GETS THE JOURNEY EVERYDAY.

God has blessed us enormously! Just look around at what God has done. I don't know of a church that has experienced the love and graciousness of God more than we have. So the question is, how do we respond to this overwhelming kindness of God? Well, I think we should follow Paul's example in scripture, when he said, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." This is no time to slow down. This is the time to press forward! We haven't arrived, we're just hitting full throttle! It's exciting isn't it?

Let's look at the scripture reading for today's sermon...

2 Kings 2:1-14 "Shortly before the LORD took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal, 2 and Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel.

3 Then the sons of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" "Yes, I know," he replied. "Do not speak of it." 4 And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho.

5 Then the sons of the prophets at Jericho came up to Elisha and said, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" "Yes, I know," he replied. "Do not speak of it." 6 And Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan." But Elisha replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on...

7 Then a company of fifty of the sons of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing Elijah and Elisha as the two of them stood by the Jordan. 8 And Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the waters, which parted to the right and to the left, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. 9 After they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken away from you?" "Please, let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

10 "You have requested a difficult thing," said Elijah. "Nevertheless, if you see me as I am taken from you, it will be yours. But if not, then it will not be so."

11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire with horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up into heaven in a whirlwind. 12 As Elisha watched, he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots and horse-men of Israel!" And he saw Elijah no more. So taking hold of his own clothes, he tore them in two. 13 Elisha also picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah, and he went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the waters. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. And when he had struck the waters, they parted to the right and to the left, and Elisha crossed over."

What can we learn from God's Word and this man, Elisha, that will help us as we continue this journey God has called us to? NOTICE, that we should...

I) REFUSE TO BE DISTRACTED: vv 1-6 "Please stay here..." To which Elisha replied, NO WAY! This is the kind of people you want around you if you are trying to change the world! There are some people that are so tenacious about the destiny God has called them to, that you can't stop them from pursuing the purpose of God even if you try to run them off. THANK GOD FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW HOW TO QUIT!

v 3 "...Do you know that the LORD will take your master away from you today?" "Yeah, but be quite, I'm sad and don't want to talk about it."

Elisha knows that Elijah's about to leave him and he's bummed out about it. His heart is broken. Yet some of the most incredible things that God will do in our lives will come at a time when we're the most confused and bewildered, and the most disoriented. So, if you feel anything like that, congratulations!

We read about Elisha's call to succeed Elijah in 1 Kings 19:19-21. We don't know much about him. He seems to come from a wealthy family and he had a servant's heart. We read in 1 Kings 19:21 "...Then he set out to follow and serve Elijah." That's about it. For more than 10 years he served Elijah without so much as an honorary mention for his service. He could have become discouraged and quit. Many probably tried to get him to, but he would not be distracted from what he knew was the will and call of God for his life.

It's easy to become disoriented in this world, and to give into distraction. And Satan is the master at keeping us preoccupied just enough to keep us ineffective in our service for God. He does it to individuals, and to churches!

It used to be that you couldn't make people miss church. It was the highlight of their week! It was a place for families to come together and learn of God and care for one another. But now, in this day that we live, every little thing keeps us from church. All these little distractions. And our children and grandchildren are paying the price.

I) REFUSE TO BE DISTRACTED: vv 1-6 CONTINUED Romans 12:2 *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Protect your mind for the distractions of this world! Notice...

II) RESPOND DECISIVELY: vv 7-9 v 7 *“...the two of them stood by the Jordan.”*
The Jordan River always represents transition in the scripture. The Jordan River is central to the transitional history of the people of Israel. NOW, here they stand, both Elijah and Elisha. It had been a hard 10 years for Elisha. Elijah was not easy to get along with. He had moods! He was gruff. He lived in caves! Elisha always running around after him, carrying his luggage and briefcase. This was no picnic. But Elisha senses that his time has come. It's not going to be much longer now. But what will he do?

vv 8-9 *“And Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the waters, which parted to the right and to the left, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. 9 After they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken away”*

This is awesome! Elijah rolls up his mantle and slaps the water real good and the Jordan divides. After walking through on dry land Elijah says, *“what would you have me do for you?”* “I, mean, you've been packing my suitcase all these years, getting my meals, helping me with stuff around the cave...SO, what would you like?”

You have to like the response Elisha gives his mentor. He doesn't ask for something small. He's not intimidated...HE AIN'T SKEERED. He's not afraid to ask for something ridiculous! God loves people like that. Elisha says, *“Please, let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,”* WHAT A RESPONSE!

I wonder, if we were asked this question, how would we respond? What would we ask for? The Bible says in James 4:2 *“...you have not, because you ask not.”*

God sure seemed to give Elisha what he asked for. Did you know that Elisha's ministry lasted more than twice as long as Elijah's? And that scripture records exactly twice as many miracles performed by Elisha than Elijah? HEY, if you ask, who knows, you might just receive!

In Elisha's mind, that was the most he could ask for. How far does your mind reach when it comes to the things of God and the Kingdom God has called you to serve? I don't want to ask God for small things. Here at C1C, I want us to learn to pray for the God-sized things!

Nehemiah knew how to ask. When Artaxerxes, King of Persia, asked Nehemiah what he needed to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, Nehemiah gave him the long list, “I'll need to take a leave of absence, and I'll need an open ended letter giving me access to the King's forest to take all the timber I'll need. And yeah, there are some who don't want this to succeed so I'll need some captains of your army and some soldiers to escort me while I'm traveling.” THAT'S THE WAY YOU ASK! Don't be afraid to ask God for big things!

III) REALIZE THE DESTINY: vv 10-14 v 10 *“You have requested a difficult thing.”* “I know I have, I meant to. I've got a big calling on my life. God wants me to do great things. I need all you've got, AND THEN SOME!”

I) REFUSE TO BE DISTRACTED: vv 1-6

II) RESPOND DECISIVELY: vv 7-9

III) REALIZE THE DESTINY: vv 10-14 CONTINUED Once we realize our destiny, once we realize the size of our call, once we realize the greatness of our commission, we'll stop asking for the piddling little things and we'll ask God for all He's got!

Notice there are conditions to a life of greatness. v 10 *"...if you see me when I'm taken away, it shall be; but if not, oh well"*

THERE WAS NO WAY ELISHA WAS GOING TO MISS THIS!

Once you realize the destiny you have with God, nothing can pull your attention away. The problem most of you have is that you've never realized your potential in Christ. You think you're just an ordinary guy or gal, and you fail to realize that although you may be average, God is exceptional! And He specializes in taking what is ordinary and making it extraordinary!

You may see C1C as a little church sitting on the side of the road, but God sees us as the fruition of all He desires to accomplish in Walker Co, Catoosa Co, Hamilton Co, and the world. COME ON...REALIZE YOUR DESTINY!

vv 11-14 The passing of the mantle... Elisha sees Elijah taken away. His mentor's mantle falls as he is carried off in spectacular fashion. Elisha just stands there watching until there's nothing left to see. Then he bends over to retrieve the only thing he has left of his master. He's emotional, but then something runs through his mind that puts an abrupt end to his grief. It dawns on him that he has to go back across the Jordan if he plans on getting home. He had help crossing it the first time, but what's he going to do now?

He walks over and looks at the Jordan. Those 50 men, sons of the prophets are on the other side with that "We told you so" look on their smirky little faces. THEN HE REMEMBERS...He said if I saw him taken away, I'd get what I asked for. "I don't feel any different, but I've never known God to go back on a promise" So he takes that old smelly mantle, that old nasty coat, and rolled it up. And as he raised it above his head he said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" That's roughly the same as "Oh Lord, I hope this works"

IN YOUR YEARS AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST, HAVE YOU EVER DONE SOMETHING YOU FELT GOD WAS LEADING YOU TO DO, ONLY TO GET IN THE MIDDLE OF IT, WITH PEOPLE WATCHING, AND YOU START THINKING, "OH LORD, I HOPE THIS WORKS". I HAVE!

Elisha struck the water with that old coat and the Bible says that water of the Jordan divided to the left and the right and Elisha walked through on dry land. Elisha realized his destiny. Isn't that awesome?!

Listen church, we have a great destiny ahead. God has called us to great things! WE HAVEN'T SEE ANYTHING YET! John 14:12 *"Truly, truly, I say unto you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do;..."*

- I) REFUSE TO BE DISTRACTED: vv 1-6
- II) RESPOND DECISIVELY: vv 7-9
- III) REALIZE THE DESTINY: vv 10-14

CONCLUSION Let me speak to you personally for a moment. Do you recognize your potential in Christ? If God gave you the gift of faith today, and caused you to believe that He has a calling on your life, and a future plan for you, would you trust Him today as your Savior? Would you commit your life to Him this morning and be saved? (Salvation plan)

Let me give you some walking points this morning before you leave. Write then down if you can...

1) The size of the BURDEN is always proportionate to the size of the BLESSING:

v 10 “you have asked a hard thing” Elijah didn’t say that to Elisha because it was going to be hard to give him a double portion. (God was going to do the giving, and there’s nothing too hard for God) Elijah said what he did because he knew the weight of responsibility that comes with the call of God.

When we ask for big blessings, they often come with a heavy burden.

Luke 12:48 *“to whom much has been given, much shall be required”*

2) The BLESSINGS of God don’t always come gift wrapped with bows:

Sometimes it comes in the form of a smelly old coat

3) Don’t ever ask less of God than what He wants to give:

2 Kings 13:14-19 *“ Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he would die. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. “My father! My father!” he cried. “The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” 15 Elisha said, “Get a bow and some arrows,” and he did so. 16 “Take the bow in your hands,” he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands. 17 “Open the east window,” he said, and he opened it. “Shoot!” Elisha said, and he shot. “The Lord’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!” Elisha declared. “You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.” 18 Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and the king took them. Elisha told him, “Strike the ground.” He struck it three times and stopped. 19 The man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.”*