

“Called To Resurrection Not Fear”

Message by DD Adams
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The Old Testament lesson is taken from the second book of Kings, chapter 2, verses 1 through 12. When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.

The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, “Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?” “Yes, I know,” Elisha replied, “so be quiet.” Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, Elisha; the Lord has sent me to Jericho.” And he replied, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they went to Jericho.

The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?” “Yes, I know,” he replied, “so be quiet.” Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” And he replied, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them walked on.

Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?” “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied. “You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.”

As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

The gospel lesson is from Mark, chapter 9, verses 2 through 9. After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what

to say, they were so frightened.) Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. This is God’s word for God’s people.

God bless the hearing, reading, understanding, and doing of your word today. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! Over the last month we’ve talked about how God’s children are created to be co-workers with each other and co-workers with God. The lessons read today are about the fear regarding transition and change.

Elijah was Elisha’s mentor. Three times Elijah tells Elisha to stay behind, (vss. 2, 4, 6) but Elisha would not. He was afraid and feeling uncertain, and he clings to Elijah the prophet. Elisha doesn’t want Elijah to depart, but suddenly the two were separated, and Elijah ascends into heaven in a whirlwind carried by a chariot of fire with horses of fire. Elisha *saw* Elijah depart.

Elisha received a double-portion of Elijah’s power. He’s authorized, transformed and transfigured into a prophet of God. Elisha (vs. 12) did what Elijah told him to do in order to receive a double portion of his master’s spirit. As Elijah

departed into the heavens—Elisha didn't take his eyes away from him—he never lost his focus in attention.

Could be that sometimes we can't grow spiritually unless someone leaves us. Maybe we lean on them too much. God gives us a gift, but we miss it. We get distracted by things that aren't important, with people or things that steal our attention over what God wants us to focus on. Elisha yielded to Elijah. His attention was focused solely on him. Elisha was no longer afraid or hesitant to become Elijah's successor. Now let's look at the gospel lesson in Mark.

Peter, James, and John went up on a high mountain with Jesus. Jesus was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. The disciples were terrified.

So what does Peter do in the midst of his confusion and awkwardness? He sticks his shoe in his mouth and says, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." Maybe he wasn't quite sure how to respond. They were so terrified.

Peter has this way of letting his fear control and dictate what he does at times. He's like many of us. He gets scared, and he responds inappropriately. Peter does a number of things that point to this pattern of behavior.

For example, when Peter stepped out of the boat to walk on water, he succumbed to his fear, and then began to sink. And when Jesus told the disciples he was going to be arrested, suffer, and die at the hands of the religious authorities—Peter said, “No Lord!” And later, Peter followed Jesus after his arrest. And while warming his hands by the fire, he was recognized as Jesus’ disciple, and out of fear, he denied Christ three times.

What’s the “So what?” to this message? I titled it “Called To Resurrection Not Fear.” That’s right; we’re not called to fear, we’re called to keep our eyes focused on the Lord. We’re called to have courage and trust in the Lord.

When we’re afraid, our eye of faith is eclipsed. We aren’t seeing well; our eye is partially darkened. Our fear hinders us, our doubt in God’s power inhibits us to move closer to God. Elisha kept his eyes focused on Elijah, on the horses and the chariot of fire. He was afraid, but he followed through in trust.

Peter lost his focus at times, and he wasn’t quite ready to endure suffering and loss. He’d much rather have seen Jesus lead an army to conquer the Romans. But after Peter received the Holy Spirit, everything changed. He preached to thousands and went through many trials. Peter kept his focus on the Lord—he turned and changed. He was crucified upside down feeling unworthy to be crucified as Christ had been.

To mature and grow in the Spirit doesn't happen overnight unfortunately. But as we come close enough to God and into the presence of Christ we continue to learn how to be co-workers with each other and with God—we learn what it means to love as God loves us.

In Mark's gospel reading we're told to listen to Jesus. To obey, to trust, and to have faith. We're called to resurrection not fear, and Jesus empowers us to walk in faith and to trust in his love and grace. Let's allow ourselves to be perfected in love. Let's lean on the powerful love of God that walks with us.

God teach us to keep our eyes of faith fixed on you as you transform and transfigure us to be co-workers with each other and with you. During the season of Lent that's soon upon us, encourage us to take the time and to embrace whatever form of denying self will have an impact on our spiritual growth. Let it be so God. Amen.