

The God of Elijah
2 Kings 2:1-14
HUMC 1 August 2021

There is a story about this one church choir director who was frustrated at the lack of commitment his choir members showed as they prepared to sing at their annual Christmas cantata.

It seemed that at least one or more members were always absent at every rehearsal and it really bothered him. At the final practice, the choir director announced, "I want to personally thank the pianist for being the only one to attend every rehearsal these past two months"

At this the pianist rose, bowed and said, "It was the least I could do, since I will not be available to play at the concert."

In this humorous story, faithfulness was very important to the choir director, but when it comes to the Kingdom of God, it is vital. Without it, we would be in very tough shape.

My text is 2 Kings 2:1-14 and it involves the faithfulness of the greatest prophet in the Old Testament. This is the story of the last day of Elijah's life.

And may we be as faithful to the Lord our God as Elijah was to the end.

When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² 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.

³ 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."⁴ 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.⁵ 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."

⁶ 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.⁷ 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. ⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.¹⁰ "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."

¹¹ 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. ¹² 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.

¹³ Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. This is the Word of God.

Elijah was one of the greatest prophets and it was during his ministry that he brought God's word to Israel at a very difficult period in their history.

Other scriptures tell us that Elijah called down fire on the animal sacrifice on Mt. Carmel and two infantry companies that were trying to capture him. He met God on the Sinai. He knew God's miraculous provision for food and water. He brought a boy back from the dead. He wandered in the desert for a period of time and was a person who fasted a lot.

He had a close associate in Elisha who succeeded him. He parted the waters and had a mysterious end.

James 5:17 in the New Testament gives us further glimpse into his character when he wrote: **"Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its crops."**

In his lifetime, Elijah had performed other miraculous signs and wonders, but it was his faithfulness to the Lord caused him to stand head and shoulders above others and his example is encouragement to us that we need to be faithful to the very end.

In the late 1990's on our military leave, we drove to Yellowstone National Park where the attraction was a geyser called Old Faithful. This geyser earned its name was because it erupts on an average of every 90 minutes give or take a few minutes. It seemed the park operated on Old Faithful's schedule and sure enough crowds of people would wait for the 130-140 foot eruption.

Faithfulness and dependability are what made Elijah great and that is why God was able to use him the way he did. On his final day, the great prophet had his most trusted assistant went on a farewell tour of the different school (group) of the prophets.

When they crossed the Jordan, **Verse 11** tells us that a chariot of fire and horses suddenly descended from heaven and Elijah was taken away like a whirlwind. It was spectacular, full of mystery, intrigue and wonder. But I don't think words can adequately

explain what really took place, except it was a glorious heavenly homecoming for the prophet.

One key theme in this story was Elijah's faithfulness to the very end. When I think about the time I am no longer active in ministry, I will want to be in the House of the Lord even if I have to use a cane, walker or wheelchair, I want to be there.

Should I be terminally ill, I think I would want to spend the majority of my time, getting ready to meet my maker and commune with God as much as I could. I hope it is the same with you.

With the Olympics going on, it reminds me that our Christian faith is like running the 100 yard dash. Unfortunately, there are people who do really, really well, only to slow down and just walk or limp across the finish line. The important thing is that we finish the race well.

I have an unofficial church hall of fame of all the churches that I have attended or pastored.

- Beulah came to church before a stair chair was put in place and she climbed the steps by sitting on her bottom. It was one step at a time.
- Grace, an organist for 60 years had to be helped by others onto the organ bench.
- 90-year-old Gus would come to church and sit in the car in the parking lot if he was coughing, but he sent in his medical aide to go to church in his place.
- Chuck and Gerry, who were in their 80's at the time, came to church on a snowmobile if the roads were not plowed.
- Steve who suffered from effects of chemo-therapy came when he could.
- Debbie who was severely mentally handicapped was in church because her deceased mother asked that she be brought to the house of the Lord.

- Sandy who had multiple medical problems and legally blind, very rarely missed a Sunday.
- Tom and Jane who lived in a group homes had to rely on others for rides, but they made it when they could.
- Ray who had dementia and a colostomy bag that sometimes broke, came despite inconvenience and embarrassment.
- Marie who taught SS for over 30 years decided to step down for teaching, but she could not stay away and was back helping out.
- Linda took care of her ailing mother, watched her grand kids, attended faithfully and taught SS for many years.
- In the final 10 days of his life, Al drove his car, parked it on the side of the church, and with assistance barely made it into the house of God.
- Other parts of the world, people would walk long distances and meet in secret.
- A 104-year-old, came to church every Sunday up to two weeks of her passing.

That is my unofficial hall of fame. I can hear God saying to each one, "Well done, Good and faithful servant".

The motto for the USMC is the Latin phrase, Semper Fidelis. Marines often greet each other with Semper Fi which means "Always Faithful."

As Christian believers that could be our motto as well. It is not easy when it is cold, wet, snow and ice. There are many distractions, temptations, struggles of faith, health, money that makes serving a challenge.

Quotes on Faithfulness: Be faithful in small things because in them your strength lies. (Mother Teresa)

A faithful God does not expect you to do what you cannot. He supplies the needed strength.

You can trust God with tomorrow because he was faithful yesterday.

Faithfulness is what made Elijah stand out and faithfulness is what God looks for in a believer. So to all of us, Semper Fidelis. I would encourage everyone to stay faithful like the old geyser at Yellow Stone and continue to run the 100 yard dash of our Christian faith.