

Title: Give me double

Scripture: 2 Kings 2.9-10

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."

Theme: There is a biblical principle of the next generation taking the mission of God forward in the same power as the last, just with a different purpose.

Introduction:

Pastor has asked that I preach this weekend as he is away at a Chi Alpha conference speaking there. We are going to be starting our Forty Days series on March 9 this year. Pastor will be focusing on the book of Philippians and the Good News. There will be six weeks of small groups culminating with a Good Friday service and Easter Sunday. Next week small group sign up will begin and I would encourage you to get involved. The relationships borne out of these small groups is vital, especially in a church our size. Our small groups become our mini communities. We will also be offering a few different books on Philippians for you to use as a guide. We are not studying a book but we will be digging into THE BOOK as we focus and move toward the most important day on our calendar: Resurrection Sunday.

Next week Pastor will begin building toward our forty days with the Macedonian call of St Paul. I would encourage you to read Acts and specifically chapter 16. He will be spending time there teaching us.

So while this message is a "stand alone" and not part of the series of three messages he will be bringing, I believe it is very important for us as we prepare to celebrate the most important day of the Christian calendar: Easter. The entire global Christian community will be celebrating the resurrection of Jesus and it seems only right and good to join in the unity of the global body of Christ as we celebrate our Lord. It will be a time of reflecting and study.

None of this can occur without the commitment of each of you. Be in prayer as Pastor Roland prepares our hearts over the next few weeks to hear from God. How can you be involved? What can you do? I would encourage you to take a risk and get involved at some level. Be in prayer about that, and then act. Mark Batterson likes to say that we need to pray like it depends on God and work like it depends on us. My prayer is that not only will we learn more about our Lord and grow in community but that new and transforming relationships will be birthed.

So I've titled my message this morning: **Give me a double**. If for no other reason but to get your attention. I want to dig into the story of a couple prophets. One happened to be one hundred percent better than his teacher. Exactly one hundred percent. But that didn't happen over night. Before we arrive at our opening scripture we have to establish a few principles, take aways as I like to call them. Points that I would encourage you to pray on and act upon during the week.

Opening illustration:

I want to look at Elijah and Elisha, two prophets with names so similar that they are sometimes confused. I preached last year on Elijah and his fight with the prophets of Baal. I don't wish to spend time there, but in order to get a reference point and some background It will be good to set some context.

Elijah had been called by God to challenge Ahab the wicked king and the prophets of Baal to a BBQ brawl. What ends up happening is what is known in military terms as the high water mark for Elijah. All by himself he hands a crushing defeat to these false prophets and orders that they all be killed. That was a victory of epic proportions. What happens next is the biggest let down that one could ever imagine. He leaves the mountain on cloud nine only to run into the cranky old queen named Jezebel. She is all ripped off that he has killed all of her prophets and vows that before the sun goes down Elijah will be worm fodder. Now the same guy who had witnessed one of the greatest moves of God only days before goes running into the desert like scared little kid. What happened? Did Elijah suffer from some sort of short term memory loss? Did he think that God only functioned on the mountain? When I read this story I asked myself those questions. Then I read this again and I found something interesting. Elijah was alone. Outside of Obadiah a believer who was in charge of the palace and presumably his servant when needed that was mentioned once, there is no mention of anyone who consistently supported Elijah.

That raised some interesting questions for me as I prayed about what to bring this week. Questions that I think are very important for us to visit. You see, because we live in a very autonomous culture, meaning we are very independent. We tend to

think we can go it alone and be ok. That nobody really understands me, especially the older generation. Whoever that older generation may be. But can we really? What happens in moments of great success and victory is we are flying high only to come down and hit the skids of everyday life and its problems. Can we stay focused? Finally, when we feel like bailing on the whole thing, can we continue to be responsible to what God has tasked us with? All of this can be seen in the moment of crisis and for the period shortly after that the man of God had after this great victory.

I want to take a look at three principles today to help us in applying the scriptures to our life and purpose. If you are taking notes they are:

- 1-Finding a mentor
- 2-Take responsibility
- 3-Get on task

So lets dive in. We are going to be in 1 and 2 kings this morning so if you have your Bibles please find 1 Kings 19. As we look at the first principle.

1- Finding a mentor

One of the things I have found in life is that being alone is not a fun thing. Especially when you are struggling and need to process with someone. If we don't have that we tend to shut down, get cranky, feel overwhelmed and in general get ticked at the world. Pity the person who asks you for one more thing when you are in such a mood. One of the things that comes out of this type of attitude is the woe-is-me pout. I know because I have mastered it! But that's ok because I am in good company. I find a sympathetic heart in Elijah. He has now bailed, left his servant

and has taken off into the desert. He gets fed by birds and is told to eat because his journey will be a long one. After forty days he finds himself at Mt. Horeb- the mountain of God. He finds a cave and hides. That is where we pick up our story:

There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." 1 Kings 19.9-14 NIV

He has a serious pout on and he begins to complain to God about all he has done and how he is all alone! How many of you feel like that at times? So overwhelmed that you can't see the forest for all the trees? Well you are not alone. Something beautiful happens here that we need to see. Because if God is the same yesterday, today and forever this principle applies NOW, FOR US. God tells him: "You are NOT ALONE! Go stand by the entrance of this cave and I'm going to show you.

First a wind, then an earthquake and finally fire. Natural chaos! Things we cannot control, things that instill fear. But then, a gentle whisper, the still small voice of God in the midst of it all. In short, God is telling Elijah the great prophet that he is never alone. In all the chaos that you face I am that gentle whisper in your ear that says: "It's going to be fine." That had to be established before God could give him his next assignment.

He wasn't to go it alone anymore. Having a servant is one thing if you need bags carried, but not so much if you need someone to confide in, share with and invest in. God was going to put someone in his life whom he would have to invest in, share with and walk with. By investing in another person he would see daily that he was not alone in it all. The scriptures tell us this:

The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel---all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him." -1 Kings 19.15-18 NIV

You have a different assignment. Go back, anoint Elisha to succeed you and oh yeah- it isn't as bad as you thought. There are seven thousand, not just you, but seven thousand who have not bent their knee to Baal.

How many of you when you are in the midst of crisis assess the situation in such a way that it is actually worse than it really is. I am great at doing that, so maybe I

am alone there. The Lord was moving Elijah into a different phase of his ministry and he needed to hear from God. The most important thing he needed to hear is found in verse 16b: "*anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.*" You have an assignment. I want you to bring this man under your care and teach him. We call that mentoring. Passing off what we know to someone else. Yet, it is so much more than that.

Mentoring seems to be one of those things that people don't do anymore. We don't need anyone like that in our lives. We can figure it out. After all we got Google, Dr. Phil and Oprah. Why on earth would I need to take the time to build a relationship with someone who I am responsible for and who is responsible for me? That sounds like work. Here's why. Because this is a Biblical principle. The first to really come to mind is Moses and Joshua. Moses invested his life into Joshua and Joshua supported and sought out Moses. In fact when Moses brought Joshua into the temple when he spoke to God, Joshua would always linger long after Moses left. He had learned from Moses what it took to have a healthy relationship with God and was putting it into practice himself. The sad thing there is I find nowhere in Scripture where Joshua mentored anyone. Once he was gone the nation went into chaos and every man did as he saw fit. That is a sermon for another time.

The biggest challenge that we face here, especially in our culture is that a person who is older needs to find someone to pass things off to. Someone who will compliment their personality and gifts. Think about it. Here we have Elijah a guy prone to fits of pouting, depression and a serious case of: "I'm all alone, there's no one here beside me. My troubles have all gone..." going on. He had a servant, but no one to hand anything off too. So God told him anoint Elisha.

Establishing a mentoring relationship is critical. Listen folks, especially those of you who are seasoned, you will not be around forever. I hate to break this to you but at some point either you are going to Jesus or he's coming for you. So are you praying about how you can entrust to reliable people the things God has entrusted you with? Can you make that type of transition and commitment to a younger person. I have no idea if Elisha was younger or not, but he was in need of someone to teach him about what God was calling him to do. And Elijah needed to be teaching somebody! Remember though young people, mentoring is a two way street. You need to be willing to admit that you just might not have all the answers and find someone who is willing to invest in you. That brings us to our second principle:

2-Take responsibility

This is a big one for both people involved. Elijah had to go find Elisha and then take him under his arm and teach him. Elisha had to decide at that moment what he was going to do. The scriptures tell it this way:

So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. "Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye," he said, "and then I will come with you." "Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" 1 Kings 19.19-20 NIV

There is something that sticks out for me here, maybe not for anyone else but in verse 20 Elijah seems to be in a mood. Elisha wants to say bye to his family and

Elijah responds in essence with: "Who cares, do what you want. I did what God told me so do whatever and lets move on." That's the start of a good relationship right there.

Listen, if and when God calls you to a place of transition and mentoring, it will be uncomfortable. It's not that Elijah didn't want to obey God, he did. But Elisha was his successor! Elijah was training himself out of a job. That is something that is so hard for any of us to do. Transitions are terrifying but we need to take responsibility for what God tells us to do. Something interesting happens with Elisha. We read this:

So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant. 1 Kings 19.21 NIV

What's going on here? Elisha realizes that God is calling him and he also has a decision to make. He destroyed his livelihood and then left to follow Elijah. He was in this for the long haul. Taking responsibility as best as he could for his part to be obedient.

Young people, when you step into a mentoring relationship how vested will you be? There are challenges to face all the way around. There is a good chance that the older person mentoring you is also in transition and looking toward the future with as much wonder as you. They will struggle with feelings of being left behind as the next generation steps up. Feelings of being insignificant and no longer valued. Each one of us needs to take special care to understand where the other person is

coming from and what they are feeling. What are the possibilities that when transitions are handled correctly you encourage them, and bring confidence knowing that the future will be even better in your hands. It is a trust relationship between two people who actually need each other in order to move the work of God forward. You both have to be vested in the process and you are both valued for who you are. Neither will be successful without the other.

This isn't just about church and transitions here either. This is life! This happens everyday and one of the best things to have is someone who can encourage and support you in the transitions that you deal with. Job changes, new children, looking for mates, what are you to do for this season in life. All these questions require us to take responsibility for what is ahead and the Bible is the source of great knowledge. One of the principles and truths is that we aren't designed to go it alone.

So Elijah has anointed Elisha. Elisha has burned all his bridges and there would be no going back and it was time to set about doing what God had called them to do. That brings us to our third and final principle:

3- Get on task

Now we don't have time to really dig into it but from 1 Kings 19 through 2 Kings 2 we see Elijah and Elisha at work as the prophet and his successor. Much like Joshua with Moses and even Timothy with Paul, Elisha learned as much as he could from Elijah. He had his assignment and it was to be the one who came after the great prophet Elijah. How do you do that? You learn as much as you can from them that's how. You know how you do it today? Surprisingly enough the exact

same way. Mentoring and being mentored in order to create good solid transitions in any venture in life is critical.

It was about so much more than a new "prophet" standing up and hollering: "I'm the guy! God said I'm next! Haha!" No, he dug in and followed Elijah everywhere. Something that I picked up on though, and this goes beyond our readings today was this: Elisha had a totally different personality than his mentor. Where Elijah saw things as glass half empty and woe-is-me, Elisha seemed upbeat. Where Elijah didn't seem to hang around with people too much Elisha was a people kind of guy. Some would say that could be cause for irritation. Possibly it was, but I think it was a good thing for both. Elijah needed someone like Elisha. I do not see in the scriptures where Elijah ever ran away into the desert pouting again. Elisha was an encourager even though he was a successor.

It is said that imitation is the greatest form of flattery. I suppose that is true. When I first started preaching I tried to preach and teach like Pastor Roland. And why not? He is a great role model! As I grew to develop my own style and my own way of doing things, one of the greatest things is to be able to say I was taught by one of the best. My Father-in-law said after a wedding I performed this past year that I was "very Pastor Roland-ish." I thought: "that's good." Yet at some point in the process of mentoring, part of our getting on task is to take up the mantle ourselves and not only move forward, but go beyond where we are. Elisha paid one of the greatest compliments to Elijah when he said: "Give me a double."

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.” 2 Kings 2.9-10
NIV*

Elisha wanted double of what Elijah had. Not out of ego, but out of respect and reverence. You have so blessed me and invested in me that I want to do not only what you did but more for the kingdom. I want to carry on your work. Elijah knew however it wasn't his decision. You see, God gives and God takes. It was in my mind, a gentle but loving rebuke and reminder. "Elisha, I have poured my life into you, but I am not the one with the power or the ability to give the anointing. It is God's job!"

Listen, our job is to get on task and work with all of our hearts at what God has called us to do. Find a mentor, and find someone to mentor, take responsibility for what we are given to do. Learn as much as possible and at the same time support and teach your mentor. God will honor and bless. It is not up to us, anymore than it was up to Elijah.

Conclusion:

So as we move toward the forty days series I encourage you, read the book of Philippians. Prayerfully consider Paul and how he invested constantly in the next generation. Be prayerful about where God has you to plug in. If you are part of the body of Christ there needs to be at least one place and thing you need to be doing beyond Sunday morning. You are uniquely you, and if you are not operating in the way God designed you the whole body of Christ suffers.

It is up to you to be hearing that gentle whisper from God and follow his instructions. Is there a mentor out there for you? Can you be mentoring someone? What assignment does God have for you? Maybe for you it is just learning to be faithful in your prayer life, your Bible reading, your tithing. Has God been pressing upon your heart to be doing something and you are just not sure? Take responsibility for that call. Get on task and take the risk of stepping into a new thing that God wants to do through you.