

Pastor Daniel Waldschmidt – St. John’s Burlington – February 7th, 2016

Well, it’s Super Bowl Sunday. Who do you got in the big game? Peyton Manning or Cam Newton? Sometimes when teams win a championship, they refer to that entire season as their road to glory. The whole Christian life is walking towards glory. Today we are going to see one believer’s walk to glory: Elijah.

“When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.” (2 King 2:1) It can be easy mix up the names Elijah and Elisha. Elijah was the one about to go to heaven. Elisha was the one who would succeed him as prophet. Now the two were very close friends. Elisha even called Elijah “my father.” Elisha already knew that God was about to take Elijah from him and yet twice in this story God sends prophets to remind Elisha, “Today is the day that God is going to take Elijah from you.”

“The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elijah 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.’” (2 Kings 2:3) And then in verse 5 God sends prophets again to say, **“Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?” “Yes I know” he replied, “So be quiet.”** Why would God send the prophets twice to tell him that? Doesn’t that seem like God is rubbing it in?

But God wasn’t being cruel. God was preparing Elisha. Sometimes elderly believers ask me, “Why doesn’t God just take me to heaven?” Sometimes the reason might be: “Because your families are not quite ready.” God lets the process be long sometimes, to give the families a chance to absorb and to say their goodbyes, but with believers it’s never goodbye, it’s “See you in glory.” Because believers are walking to glory.

When Elijah was taken to heaven it was in a spectacular blaze of glory. **“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.” (2 Kings 2:11-12).** When believers go to heaven, it’s usually not in a blaze of glory, at least not one that we can see. But behind the scenes things might look very different. Do you remember Jesus’ parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus? When poor Lazarus died, it says that the angels carry him to Abraham’s side. So when believers die, their souls go to heaven, and it’s very glorious, we just don’t see it.

The best part about heaven is that believers get to see the glorious face of our Lord Jesus Christ. The sight of Jesus shining in glory is more amazing than we could ever imagine! That’s what believers get to see when they go to heaven. When Peter, James and John were on the mountain of transfiguration, they got to see a glimpse of Jesus’ unveiled glory. In the gospel of Matthew it says that Jesus, face shone like the sun. In Luke it says that the appearance of his face changed. In Mark, the gospel lesson that we read, it says that **“He was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.” (Mark 9:3)** Peter, James and John caught a glimpse of Jesus glory but in heaven, we will get to always gaze on Jesus’ glory.

There were two people talking with Jesus: one was Moses and the other was our friend Elijah. Now usually believers go to heaven through death, but Elijah never actually died. God took him up to heaven in the whirlwind and with the chariot and horses of fire. Elijah is one of only two people to not

experience death. The other person to not experience death was Enoch. In the book of Genesis it says, **“Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.” (Genesis 5:24)** And in the book of Hebrews it says, **“By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death: ‘He could not be found, because God had taken him away.’ For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. And without faith it is impossible to please God.” (Hebrews 11:5)**

Two people in the history of the world have not experienced death: Elijah and Enoch. Do you think that you might be spared the experience of death? Can you think of a scenario in which you might be spared the experience of death? Well, if the Lord Jesus comes back in your lifetime you will not experience death. Instead your body will be transformed into glory. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, **“Listen, I tell you a mystery, we will not all sleep [here sleep means death, some believers will be alive when Jesus comes back and they won’t die, they will just be transformed into glory] , but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will all be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)** We very much want Jesus to come back within our lifetimes, because then, like Elijah, we won’t have to die, we will just be transformed into glory.

The Christian life is a walk towards glory. And the Bible says that since your destination is the glory and holiness of heaven, then we should live in a holy way right now. It’s like the children sang in our song today, “I want to walk as a child of the light.” The logic of the Bible is, “One day I’m going to perfectly holy in heaven, and therefore I want to live in a holy way right now.” If your destination is holiness, then live in a holy way right now.

In our lesson Elisha said to Elijah, **“Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.” (2 Kings 2:9)** What’s the spirit of Elijah? Well, in the book of 1 Kings, Elijah says that he was “very zealous for the LORD.” The spirit of Elijah was that he had zeal, a strong desire for God’s commandments. So when Elisha says, “Give me a double portion of your spirit” he’s saying, “May God give me the same zeal for the LORD that you have.” Brothers and sisters my prayer for you is that you would have a zeal for the LORD. My prayer for you is that God would give you a double portion of the Holy Spirit so that you have a zeal to live a holy life, to follow God’s commandments, to walk as a child of the light.

The Christian life is a walk to glory. Today we saw how Elijah walked to glory. And soon we will see how Jesus walked to glory. Today is the last Sunday before Lent and in Lent we will follow Jesus to glory. But as we follow Jesus on his walk to glory we will be shocked to discover that Jesus’ greatest glory is revealed on the cross. On the cross, Jesus shows the glory of his love for us. The reason that the Christian life is a walk to glory is because Jesus died on the cross to take away all our sins. He loved us so much that he did that for us. Glory be to Jesus! Amen.