

Text: 2 Kings 2:1-12. Transfiguration Sunday. **February 18, 2015.**

It is good for us to be here, seeing Christ's glory. Amen.

Look at the glory we have seen. Over the past several weeks, we have been celebrating Epiphany. Epiphany means to show or reveal. Jesus has certainly shown us some glory. Wise men came to worship him. They came to worship a baby! They brought priceless gifts to a baby! What glory they showed him. We saw Jesus baptized. And the voice of God himself boomed from heaven, "This is my Son!" What glory! Jesus has healed the sick. We know he raised the dead. But you ain't seen nothin' yet. Transfiguration. Jesus revealed his glory. Clothes dazzling white. Moses and Elijah, in the flesh, talking with Jesus. A cloud envelopes the disciples. What glory! Glory so great, Peter wanted to put up shelters and stay and never, ever leave. Who can blame him? When you have seen that glory you want it to last. But Jesus said to Peter, "You ain't seen nothing yet. Wait until I rise from the dead." Rise from the dead? That's glory. You ain't seen nothin' yet. If we think we have seen glory through Epiphany, we ain't seen nothin' yet. Wait until Easter. Wait until Jesus rises from the dead! That's glory! You ain't seen nothin' yet.

The same was true for Elijah. He was a man just like us. His life had ups and downs, just like us. He knew sadness. He lived loneliness, as one of the only prophets of the true God. He hid in caves and wished to die. And who can blame him? The king of his nation called him a troubler for proclaiming God's Word. The queen wanted to cut his head off. But Elijah had seen glory to see him through the suffering and great as that glory was, he ain't seen nothin' yet. Elijah saw famine and fire and fifty. Elijah, a man just like us, prayed and it did not rain for three and a half years. This was God's glory, bringing judgment on the false god Baal who was supposed to bring rain and prosperity and fertility. Elijah saw fire. On one occasion, it was Elijah, all alone, against 450 prophets of this false god Baal. To prove the glory of the true God, they agreed, "We will build two altars. Each of us will call on our god. The God who answers by fire, he is God." Baal's prophets cried and called all day. Nothing. Elijah called on the LORD. Fire consumed the altar, burned up the rocks and licked up the water they had poured over the sacrifice. For one brief moment, Elijah saw the glory. For one brief moment, Elijah was not alone. For one brief moment, the people cried, "The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!" But then the people went back to their Baal-following ways. The king sent fifty men to capture Elijah. They called out, "Man of God, come with us." Elijah replied, "If I'm a man of God, may fire from heaven come down." Fire from heaven came down. Killed the fifty men. Eventually, one of the leaders of fifty men bowed down and asked Elijah nicely. Think of the glory Elijah had seen! And we could go on with more miracles, more glory and yet for all this, Elijah ain't seen nothin' yet.

So for a while, in spite of all the glory Elijah has seen, he has been begging to die. Finally, his work is finished and God will grant his request. Elijah makes kind of a farewell tour and stops in a few places to encourage the companies of prophets before he goes to heaven, much like Jesus met with and encouraged his followers before he ascended to heaven. Somehow, not sure how, Elijah knew he was going to heaven. Elisha knew it. The company of the prophets knew it. These prophets are buzzing about this. This was big news. I picture a bunch of giddy seminary students finally getting to meet the great Elijah. They can't wait. They can't believe they have received this special knowledge. God is going to take Elijah away. It's like they all wanted front row seats. It was all they wanted to talk about.

But not Elisha. He didn't want to talk about it. When the prophets brought it up, he said, "I know. Shh!" When they asked him again, he said, "I know. Shh!" Elisha was going to stay with Elijah until the very end. It's admirable. It's remarkable. Who can blame him? This is your spiritual father. This is the guy who called you to be a prophet. This is the guy you've been following around. You've got big shoes to fill. You want to listen to this guy and learn from this guy as long as you can. Your one request, when given a blank check is this, "I want a double portion of your spirit." Don't think for a second that Elisha is arrogantly asking, "I'm going to be twice the prophet you ever were." Not at all. Elisha was humbly saying, "I'm not half the man you are. I can't do this on my own. Your spirit, that you inherited from God, that's what I need. God told you that I am going to take your place and be the leader of the prophets. That's too big a job for me. I need your spirit. I need God's Spirit. I'm not going to leave your side until I have that." Elisha was going to hang on to Elijah until the very, bitter end.

Then Elisha really had to hang on, because he ain't seen nothin' yet. They're walking along, just chatting and then bang! Out of nowhere! Bang! Exclamation point at the beginning of the sentence! Suddenly! Bang! A chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them! Can you imagine? Can you picture? A chariot of fire and horses of fire sent from heaven itself! How can this be just one verse? A chariot of fire and horses of fire! And Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind? What a sight! Whatever Elisha had seen, whatever he had experienced, it was nothin' compared to this.

Think of the comfort for Elisha as he picks up that cloak and knows, "I'm the man now. I'm God's prophet." His hands had to be shaking with that thought, but also comforted to know, "I ain't seen nothin' yet. I'm going to the same heaven Elijah did. Maybe I won't go in such a miraculous way. But I'll be going." Think of the encouragement to keep preaching God's Word. Doesn't matter if the king wants me dead. I've got God on my side. Doesn't matter if the queen hunts me down. God will rescue me. Doesn't matter if

I'm the only prophet. God brought fire from heaven for Elijah. God sent a chariot and horses to rescue him. God will take care of me as well.

And we long to see that glory! If only I had been there. Do you know what I would have paid for a front row seat to see this chariot and these horses of fire? How much I would have paid for a back row seat, just to see it from a distance. I ain't seen nothin' like that. Yeah, what have you seen? An ordinary guy in a white dress puts a few drops of water on a babies' head. A dove didn't fly out of the sky. God's voice didn't boom from heaven. What's the big deal? Maybe there was that time my dad was sick enough to die and grandma prayed all night for him to get better. And yes, maybe the doctors had no explanation the next morning for his recovery. But that still sounds more like family fairy tale than family fact. What glory have you seen? What glory have we ignored? What glory have we sinfully despised, taken for granted, forgotten about? When have we demanded more, as though the glory God has shown us just isn't good enough?

God has mostly hidden his glory. The cross looks gory, not glory. But when God brought his Word to you, in the flesh, he changed the way you see that cross. That cross is glory! There is the glory of my forgiveness. There is the glory that my sins are paid in full. When that ordinary guy in that white dress poured that water on your head, God's Word worked a glorious change. You became, and very definitely still are, God's child. What more glorious status could there be? What great love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! You are loved! You are forgiven! You are treasured! So treasured, Jesus went all the way to that gory cross, to give you the glory of his forgiveness. Think of the glory you have seen. Many, most of you here, have held the body that hung on that cross, right in your hand! What could be more glorious? That blood, that stained those boards, will enter your body in just minutes. Talk about glory to hold with trembling hands. Face to face, eye to eye, hand to hand, body to body with Christ! That's glory my friends!

And you know what, you ain't seen nothin' yet. That body of Jesus rose and so your body will rise too. Someday, and maybe someday soon, you won't just hold bread. You will hold the nail pierced hand of Jesus. You won't just drink wine, you will hug the Savior, flesh and bones and body and blood and hair and skin. And that will last forever. Forever with Jesus? That's glory! Every day one step closer to home. That's exciting! Yeah, we've seen some glory, but man, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

We stopped the reading at what might seem to be a strange place, with an almost sad ending. And Elisha saw him no more. People looked for Elijah on earth. Couldn't find him, because Elijah was in heaven. After seeing the glory, Elisha had work to do proclaiming God's Word. Jesus didn't let his disciples stay on the mount of Transfiguration. They had work to do, learning from Jesus and proclaiming God's Word. Jesus had work to do, suffer and die, pay for the sins of the world and ultimately rise from the dead and ascend into heaven. The glory they had seen prepared them for their work, for suffering. Their work, their suffering, reminded them that any glory on earth is temporary. Only the glory of heaven is eternal. The glory also assured Elisha. He knew, "I won't see Elijah on earth. But I am certain I will see him in heaven." I've got to get at my work of being God's prophet to proclaim God's Word and help other people join us. I don't have to worry that I don't see Elijah any more. I do need to think about the people that are here, people who need to see God's glory, people who need to hear God's Word. Because while I've seen some great glory, I ain't seen nothin' yet. And no matter how much glory you have seen, even a chariot and horses of fire, you ain't seen nothin' yet. Amen.