

## Theme: A GLIMPSE OF GLORY

- I. The glory of the saints who have fought for the faith on earth (vv. 1-10)
- II. The glory of the saints who enter into eternal glory (vv. 11, 12a)
- III. The glory that encourages us as we continue on in our spiritual struggles (v. 12b)

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

**<sup>3</sup> 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.”**

**<sup>4</sup> 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.**

**<sup>5</sup> 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.”**

**<sup>6</sup> 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.**

**<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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.**

**<sup>9</sup> 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.**

**<sup>10</sup> “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.”**

**<sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more.**

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## Address

Their patience was rewarded. After two days of clouds, three young men woke up in the wee hours of the morning with hopes of clearer skies. They climbed a hill near Lake Saiko outside a small Japanese town all for a chance at a better view. After two days and several hours of waiting out in clouds and rain, the men were rewarded with a glorious glimpse of Japan’s famous Mount Fuji, a wonder to behold. In our text today, we see Elijah and Elisha, men of God, also endured clouds and adversity, all for A GLIMPSE OF GLORY, just as Peter, James, and John caught A GLIMPSE OF our Lord’s GLORY on the mount of Transfiguration. Today we also come by faith to catch A GLIMPSE OF GLORY, rest for our souls, in God’s Word, as Elisha caught A GLIMPSE OF GLORY at the entrance of Elijah into heaven.

Our portion of God’s Word for today tells us from the beginning *how* Elijah made it to heaven. “**The LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven.**” Elijah didn’t get himself to heaven; the LORD *took* him. The way Elijah got to heaven is exactly the same as you and me. God took him. That’s the only way we can get to heaven. God’s got to get us there. For Elijah details are different. But first, a stroll down memory lane.

In the movie *Toy Story 3*, Andy, the toys’ owner, prepares to leave for college. As he leaves, he gives away his precious childhood toys to a nearby neighbor girl named Bonnie. Even as he passed down his prized possessions, he takes a trip down memory lane, introducing his old toys individually to their new owner, and even plays with them before driving away.

As Elijah prepared to hand over the prophetic torch to Elisha, the two men took one last journey together down memory lane. From Gilgal, also the name of the encampment where the Israelites came west of the Jordan under Joshua, to Bethel, the “house of God” where God appeared to Jacob as he fled from his brother Esau. From Bethel to Jericho, the first city the Israelites conquered as the LORD brought the city’s walls down for his people. From Jericho to the Jordan, the river God’s people had crossed so many times already. At each stop, Elijah tells

Elisha to stop. Each time, Elisha insists on going with his master. He knew his master would soon be leaving, as we see him say to the “sons of the prophets,” called the “company of the prophets in our text.” What does that mean? The company of the prophets is a group of men either in training to be prophets or already prophets themselves, perhaps somewhat similar to our vicars. They come from Bethel and Jericho, and fifty at the Jordan River! What a sight for Elijah, who had once claimed he was the only one left who remained zealous for the LORD! Here he sees his hard work had results. The LORD’s prophets come out to see him off, but also to prepare his protege for his passing.

At the Jordan, Elijah gets ready to cross over. He rolls up his cloak of camel’s hair and strikes the water in a motion that mimics the great prophets before him: Moses with his staff, Aaron with his rod. And just like those men crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, he and Elijah cross over. As Joshua and the whole host of Israel crossed into the promised land, Elijah prepares to cross from the promised land of Israel to a far greater promised land.

But before he does so, he wants to give one last parting gift to his prophet-in-training, Elijah. Alex Trebek, the long-time host of game show Jeopardy, passed away a couple months back, but before he died, he left 62 acres of open space to the public as a parting gift. Elijah also wanted to give some parting gift to Elisha, but he was short on earthly possessions, so he told Elisha to ask for something. **“What can I do for you before I am taken from you?”**

Elisha takes his master as more than just a teacher, though. As children receive an inheritance from their parents, Elisha requests an inheritance from Elijah. **“Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.”** Among the Israelites, the oldest son received a double inheritance as his birthright. Double the land, earthly possessions. But Elisha asks for something far greater, a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. So what does that mean, exactly? Elijah’s spirit, his zeal and resolve to serve the LORD in spite of fierce and seemingly endless opposition, was worked in him by none other than God the Holy Spirit. Elisha is really asking here that he would succeed Elijah as his successor, not as some great prophet, but with the fortitude and will to accomplish the LORD’s will. A great request for a parting gift; a great request for any of God’s children to ask for!

And a request Elijah does not have power to grant. He can only make him a promise in the form of a sign. **“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.**” Elijah’s answer was that, if Elisha got A GLIMPSE OF GLORY, he would receive his request. If not, he would not.

The two men moved on, walking and talking, when seemingly out of thin air fiery horses and at least one chariot of fire appear. They separate the two men, just like a flaming sword separated Adam and Eve from paradise. Now Elijah, bound for paradise, is taken up in a whirlwind; unlike every other human in existence, he does not taste death. Meanwhile Elisha, his spiritual successor, looks on. A GLIMPSE OF THE GLORY that awaits him, too. Elijah goes to be with his Savior, while Elisha calls on, “**My father! my father!**” His teacher acted as his spiritual father. Elisha adds, “**The chariots and horsemen of Israel!**” He’s not calling out to the fiery chariots and horses, but he calls after Elijah. In ancient warfare, chariots and horsemen were like tanks; they leveled the opposition far quicker than the average foot soldier. Elijah was not a warrior, but a prophet; he waged spiritual warfare. In his faithful service to our God, he leveled the opposition and exposed the idols of his countrymen. Elijah showed the LORD was his God, and proclaimed the word of the LORD to many.

Is our day any different? We don’t have horsemen and chariots, nor do we see the prophets of Baal. People don’t bow down to idols made of wood and stone like the idols Elijah preached against; instead, we bow down to slips of green paper and hunks of chrome, glass, and plastic. We who have advanced far beyond visiting pagan temples for promiscuous priestesses now can instead find all we want in the comforts of our own home simply by a click of a button, typing a few words. No longer do we sacrifice our children on pagan altars; instead, we sacrifice them on the altar of our own convenience. We’ve taken away the veneer of false religion and indulge ourselves just as well! And instead of taking up the battle cry against the great evils of our day and the great evils of this world, we grow content to live with them, grow comfortable with them; the fight grows long and we grow weary. We give up on the fight all too quickly, serving ourselves rather than the LORD our God.

That’s why Elijah’s story matters, though. He gave up, but God did not. God sent him back. God provided relief. And God took him home. After Elijah went up to heaven, “**Elisha saw him no more.**” Very careful phrasing. Not “no one saw him ever again,” but Elisha didn’t, at least at that point. The prophets searched for him, but he was nowhere to be found. He showed up again, though. He shows up in the Gospel for today, where he and Moses discuss departure. Not Moses’ exodus from Egypt or Elijah’s departure from this world, but Jesus’ departure into glory. And in

A rare GLIMPSE OF GLORY, the disciples Peter, James, and John see Jesus in radiant splendor. Only for a moment. They discuss the glory of how Jesus must depart this world, so we can get to heaven.

Just like Elijah, God must get us into heaven. He brings us through Jesus, that faithful servant of the LORD. Jesus, who took the battle not just to false idols, but to sin and Satan itself. Jesus, who after A GLIMPSE OF GLORY, descended the mount of Transfiguration to finish his work of saving you. Jesus, whose resolve never wavered, whose zeal remained constant. Jesus, who would not rest until he went to the cross for pay for our spiritual half-heartedness and outright idolatry alike. Jesus, who would not rest until he brings us into his eternal rest in heaven. We get to heaven the same way Elijah did, like Elisha and all God's people: only through Jesus, our Savior, who set his face like flint. He would not be deterred from loving you, saving you. So he for a time he set aside the glory rightly due him to bring you into his glory. In heaven, we'll have more than just a glimpse, but our fill of eternal glory with Jesus, our Savior.

We might wonder what Elisha felt, now that his master had gone away from him. But he got his GLIMPSE OF GLORY. He received from God the strength he needed to carry on his task, to walk in the shoes of one of the greatest prophets. Elisha received strength from God, a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and he put it to work. Elisha returned to Israel from the Jordan. The Bible records twice as many miracles for Elisha, too. His GLIMPSE OF GLORY shows his request granted.

We also cannot stay here forever. Here we heard the glory of the LORD proclaimed in his sacred Word. Here we crossed the river with Elijah and Elisha; we climbed the mountain with Peter, James, and John. We look forward to climbing another mountain in a couple months, not Fuji, but Calvary, where we will see our Savior, bloodied and bruised, beaten and broken, for our salvation. As we do so, we see A GLIMPSE OF GOD'S GLORY, not glorious in the eyes of the world, but our salvation on full display. As we leave this house of God today, we go back to our lives of service to God. We return to our struggles with sin and our spiritual warfare. Yet we return reinvigorated, because God's Word has proclaimed to us Jesus, who takes away our sin. Jesus gives us his Holy Spirit, who works in our hearts through his Word.

As we gather in the house of God, we have A GLIMPSE OF GLORY as we look forward to our heavenly goal. As we return to our earthly service, we go with God's forgiveness, as the hymn reminds us:

2/14/2021

2 Kings 2:1-12a

IHS

“Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure. Here you learned how much I love you, what I can cure. Here you heard my dear Son’s story; here you touched him, saw his glory. Go, my children, sins forgiven, at peace and pure” (CW: 332 st. 2).