

2 Kings 2:1-12a Transfiguration Sermon 2024

I will not leave you

When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah was traveling with Elisha from Gilgal. ²Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As surely as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.

³The sons of the prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD is taking your master away from you?”

Then he said, “Yes, I know. Be quiet.”

⁴Then Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here because the LORD has sent me to Jericho.”

But he said, “As surely as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So they went to Jericho.

⁵Then the sons of the prophets who were in Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD is taking your master away from you?”

He said, “Yes, I know. Be quiet.”

⁶Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here because the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.”

But he said, “As surely as the LORD lives and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.” So the two of them went on.

⁷Then fifty men from the sons of the prophets came and stood and watched them from a distance, while the two of them were standing at the Jordan. ⁸Elijah took his cloak, folded it together, and struck the water. The water divided to the right and to the left. Then the two of them crossed on dry land.

⁹When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask me for whatever I can do for you before I am taken from you.”

Then Elisha said, “Let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.”

¹⁰He said, “You have asked for a difficult thing. If you see me being taken from you, it will surely be yours. But if not, then it will not.”

¹¹While they were walking and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire, and horses of fire came and separated them. So Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹²Elisha was watching and crying out, “My father! My father! Israel’s chariot and its charioteers!” Then he did not see him anymore.

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Of all of the miracles of Jesus – which ones were never healed or undone by any OT prophet or person?
Blindness.

Psalm 146:8 says, “**The LORD opens the eyes of the blind.**” That kind of miracle sets Jesus apart from all of the other prophets and servants of God in the Bible. Isaiah talks a lot about that specific miracle of Jesus the Messiah. 2 Cor 4: also talks about how sin is a spiritual blindness. And yet today the face of Jesus shines brighter than the sun.

Are we blind? Blind spiritually?

I wonder if we can be forgetful on purpose, or ignorant on accident? These two things concerning sin can be eternally dangerous.

Are we so busy that we can be blind? Are we so wrapped up in something sinful that we are blind to being called servants of Christ? Are we so concerned with living in the moment that we ignore the voice of Jesus calling us to this mountain where we hear about this glimpse of glory? Are we so forgetful and ignorant to abuse our bodies which are temples of the Holy Spirit? We may try to leave Jesus – but Jesus does not try to leave us.

Today, I'm happy to see you – even if you have no opinion about seeing me. Because: today I am honored to talk to you about death. Yes, death.

What is death? God teaches that death is a separation of body and soul. Death makes things stop. Stop breathing, stop talking, stop listening, stop working, stop seeing, stop serving and stop living.

Sin makes things stop. Faith can be ruined by sin repeated and unrepentant sin. Are we forgetful on purpose or ignorant on accident?

Can you imagine being Elisha who saw Elijah taken up into heaven in the whirlwind? Jesus says, “**I will never leave you.**” But Elijah says, “**I will.**” God was going to take Elijah away on that busy day. Elijah is not our savior – only Jesus is.

On what kind of a busy day is God going to take us away? It can be a surprise no matter what. The less we listen to Jesus the more darkness suffocates the light. The less we listen to Jesus the more we try to preach ourselves instead of him. The less we listen to Jesus the more we will be blind to clearly seeing the light of Jesus shine from that mountain of glory to this house of God today.

On another mountain at Jesus' ascension the last words he says to believers of all time are, “**And surely I am with you always until the end of the age.**” That is very similar to Elisha saying three times, “**I will never leave you.**”

Many ask, why is God so violent? ...Because the Devil is more violent. In Holy Baptism we are taught that the old sinful nature needs to be drowned by daily contrition and repentance. In Holy Communion it is the body and blood of Jesus with the bread and wine that was shed by Jesus and is Jesus, to forgive our sins.

Pastor, why is God so violent? Because he needs to be in a violent world, with a violent enemy, with sinful flesh that can respond violently in ignorance or intentionally.

Drastic, violent and sudden. God's Word is drastic and sudden in that Jesus is finished being the sacrifice that was violently treated in that way, in our place. God in the Bible tells souls to repent for being forgetful on

purpose and ignorant on accident. Repent and be forgiven for being forgetful and ignorant about sin and forgiveness.

We can hear echoes of Mark 9:7 'listen to him' in Ecclesiastes 5:1 **“Watch your step when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen, rather than to give the kind of sacrifice fools give, for they do not know that they are doing wrong.”** Why do we need to be careful, why should we watch our step? Because where God is there is his house. Listen to him is the command that God gives concerning Jesus his Son. So, what Jesus says, the promises he makes, the commands he gives and the warnings he speaks are real, valid and true. This glimpse of Jesus' glory helps believers to take his words in earnest and sincere hearts. We need to listen as we go to the house of God.

We dare not hold back the sins and addictions that cause us to ignore the voice of God saying, 'listen.' Listen to Jesus say, “repent.” We listen to Jesus say to the repentant, “I forgive.” The gospel is how God stays with us and does not leave. When we come back to the house of God we hear God's voice say through Elisha and Pastor, **“I will not leave you.”**

God forgives the forgetful on purpose and ignorant on accident. God's grace is freely given to you through his Word and Sacraments.

Two Old Testament believers, Enoch and Elijah, ascended into heaven bodily – as a foreshadowing of Jesus who would ascend into heaven also, but not before he would die. First Jesus died then he rose from the dead then he ascended bodily into heaven. It wasn't a vision or a dream – Jesus really went up to prepare a place for believers. God blessed those two men with a gift that they did not taste death. Jesus did something more than what Elijah needed to do. When God was done expecting Elijah to carry out his work of being a prophet – God took him into heaven outside of death.

When God was done expecting Jesus to carry out his work of being our Savior – God took his soul into heaven inside of death. Jesus tasted death for you and me. But even more Jesus powerful words of truth and grace say, **“never will I leave you, never will I forsake you”** (Heb 13:5b) are still real and relevant through God's Holy Word.

Little Deakan Seibel who was born just a little while ago in January may have a day in his life, maybe 90 years from now when God is ready to take him home too. But it isn't anything that adorable little Deakan does – it is everything that Jesus does to gain the right for us to be declared to belong to him. Parents who believe and trust in Jesus' Word of promise have their children Baptized. Those who are Baptized continue to grow in faith privately and publicly over an open Bible. Those who, like Deakan, will also bring their own children to church where Jesus continues to fulfill his promise to 'never leave you' through his Divine Words of truth and life.

Elijah reappeared again long after Elisha had died. At Jesus' transfiguration he and Moses talk about Jesus' death and resurrection. On the outside when Jesus was crucified it may have seemed like he did leave his disciples. But not long after he rose from the dead he came to prove his words were absolutely true. I will not leave you – Jesus says the same to all who trust and depend on him.

Today God our heavenly Father says to believers of all time, **“this is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”** ... and what does Jesus have to say? **“I will not leave you.”** More faithful and dedicated than Elisha, more trustworthy than Abraham, more dependable than King David, Jesus is the most. Jesus is the greatest who does what he says and says what he does.

Today Jesus gives a glimpse of his divine and true glory so we believers can know that God really did come to take away the sin of the world. Today Jesus gives a glimpse of his divine and true glory so we disciples have courage and confidence that every word he speaks will come true. Today Jesus reveals his heavenly identity as

the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Jesus will never leave you by his gift of faith, Jesus will never leave you by his gift of grace, Jesus will never leave you – and should you go running away from him – believers from your home congregation will repeat these very words of God, “I will never leave you.” **Jesus wants you back to be with him in heaven.**

In listening to Jesus our forgiving Savior we hear him do what he says and say what he does. Jesus will not leave us as orphans, he cares dearly for his own through his Means of Grace. Knowing Jesus is everything, believing Jesus is everything.

Jesus forgives sinners who do things on purpose or on accident as we repent to him. Jesus forgives forgetful and ignorant who fail to take his Bible seriously. Jesus forgives and by his words stays with us ‘**always until the end of the age.**’

Jesus gave a glimpse of heaven to those three disciples at his Transfiguration. Elijah was taken away from Elisha as a glimpse of heaven. At Jesus’ Ascension we are given a glimpse of heaven as Jesus will return in a much more spectacular way.

Jesus says to your soul, “I will never leave you” through his gift of faith through Holy Baptism and the Holy Bible. The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts through the means of Grace.