The Prophet Elijah
1 Kings 19:19-21
The Call of Elisha

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

Introduction

- Before we get to today's message…
- I want to let you know what's coming up **over the next several weeks**.
- **We're going to take a** break from Elijah.

- Next week, Brian will preach, and then we'll have four weeks of **Advent messages** which will conclude with our **Christmas Eve Service**.
- And I would encourage you to **invite people** (especially non-believers or non-church goers) during advent.
- The messages will be centered on **who Christ is and why he came.**

- Then after Christmas, Sean Cadd will preach on the last Sunday of the year.
- So, we won't **return to Elijah till 2027!**

- **And maybe you're ready for a break from Elijah!**
- Because over **the last two weeks** his life has been a bit depressing.
- If not for us, **then certainly for Elijah.**

- His fear of **Queen Jezabel** and his **guilt for running** away for his **ministry**.
- Caused Elijah to suffer from both **spiritual depression (wanting to die)**
- And then discouragement, wrongly believing that he was the only one left that could do Lord's work.

- But God never gave up on him, **he didn't condemn Elijah**, instead he **gave him grace.**
- In Elijah's depression, the Lord came to him in the wilderness of Beersheba with food, rest, restoration, **the touch of an angel**, and a call to **Mount Horeb**, the mount of God.

- And on **Mount Horeb** where Elijha hid in a cave, **believing a series of self-centered half-truths**.
- The Lord again came to him, with a series of **God-centered whole truths**.
- God revealed himself to Elijah in **a gentle still small voice**.
- And God re-called Elijah back into ministry, giving him a set of instructions to carry out.
- And one those instructions was…

[16] …Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. (1 Kings 19:16)

- God had and would continue to **work in and through the prophet Elijah**.
- But there would come a time when **Elijah** would no longer be **available.**
- And so, **God in his Sovereignty**, had chosen another man to **take his place.**

- And it's to that man, **Elisha** that we turn.
- Let me read our text for today, **1 Kings 19:19-21**.

19 So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" 21 And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him. (1 Kings 19:19-21)

- As we have studied the life of Elijah, we've learned much, first from his very **positive example.**
- And then in the last two weeks from his somewhat **negative example**.
- And we will learn more in **2027!**

- But today **we'll learn from Elisha's example and his call into ministry.**
- And the first thing I want us to see is that…

1. Elisha's Call Came by <u>Divine</u> Edict

- And what **that means** is Elisha was **called by the will and command of God**.
- Or put simply **Elisha was called by God.**
- **And his call illustrates** the first lesson I want us to see: **that is**

God calls His people.

- **Elisha's call was God's idea.**
- We just read that Lord said to **Elijah…**

16 …Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. (1 Kings 19:16)

- This is the **divine edict** telling Elijah to anoint **Elisha as a prophet in his place.**
- And neither **Elijah** nor **Elisha** were involved in **this decision**.
- **It was all God's idea and God commanded it take place.**
- **And Elijah, again trusts and obeys the LORD!**

19 So he departed from there (Mount Horeb) and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. <u>Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him</u>. (1 Kings 19:19)

- This casting of the **cloak** (or **mantle** in the KJV), was a **symbol of God's call on Elisha's life.**
- In fact, the expression ***"wearing someone's mantle"*** comes from this passage.
- By casting his cloak (his mantle) over Elisha,
- **Elijah** was designating this younger man as **his successor.**

- **Elijah's cloak** symbolized the **spiritual authority** that went with the **office of prophet.**

- And again, **this calling/anointing** of Elisha was **God's idea**.
- **Elisha's** call did not come from men, but from God.
- Now of course, he still had to answer God's call, but the calling itself came from the LORD.

- And the same this is true for **every Christian**.
- In fact, the Bible teaches that **God issues two basic calls to his people**.
- **First there is…**

A. The Call to Salvation and Sanctification

- Now this call is probably not part of Elisha's call **that we just looked at,**
- More than likely **Elisha had already**, some time in the past, **responded to this call**.

- But this is the call that every believer experiences.
- **It is the call to** come **to Christ**, to **follow Jesus**, to **be saved**
- **and to enter into a relationship which God who** then brings about your **sanctification**.
- Your transformation into the image of Jesus Christ.

- We see this **call proclaimed** by **Peter in Acts 2** during his **first sermon** following **Pentecost.**
- Peter has just **explained to the crowd** how they could be saved,
- How they could have **their sins forgiven and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.
- And then he says…

39 For the promise (of the Holy Spirit) is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself." (Acts 2:39)

- The promise of the Holy Spirit (who is the seal of our salvation)
- is given to everyone that **the LORD God calls to himself**.
- We see this also in Paul's letter to **the Thessalonians**…

13 …God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 14 To this he called you through our gospel… (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)

- If you are a believer, it is not because of anything you have done,
- It is because **God chose and called** you to be **saved and sanctified**.
- Paul makes this **very point** in his second letter to **Timothy…**

9 [God] saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace… (2 Timothy 1:9)

- If you **ask me** why God saved me, **why God called me into relationship?**
- This **is the only answer I can give**.
- It is not because of my works (it is not because of me)
- **but only because of his own purpose and grace**.

- We do not come **to God on our own initiative**, we come to God because he **calls us.**
- And how does **he make the call**? How does he call us to Salvation in Jesus Christ?

- Well, Jesus said…

44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him… (John 6:44)

- God the Father does a work in our hearts,
- a drawing or calling that brings people to Jesus.
- And how does he do that?

- What means does God use to call **people to Jesus.**
- Well as we just read, **Paul said to the Thessalonians it is**…

To this he called you <u>through our gospel</u>

- The primary means of calling and drawing people to Jesus is the gospel, the word of God.
- As Paul wrote to **Timothy it is…**

15 …the sacred writings (the word of God), which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:15)

- As people read the Bible or **hear the word preached.**
- God does a work to call them to himself by making them wise for salvation
- and giving them faith in Christ Jesus. **As Paul wrote to the Romans…**

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

- So, to summarize…
- **God's call to salvation and sanctification** involves Him doing a work (a drawing) in our hearts and minds,
- and he does this work through his word.
- It is through the word of God that people understand that they are sinners who must put their faith in a savior.
- **And that savior, the gospel declares, is Jesus Christ.**

- So, the question is, have you responded to **God's call to salvation and sanctification.**
- Have you put your faith (your trust) in Jesus Christ as your LORD and Savior.
- If not then you can do that today, you can respond to his call.
- You can respond to the gospel that is being preached right now.
- By putting your faith in and surrendering your life to Jesus Christ.

- And if you do God will save you from your sins, transform your life earthly life
- and give you eternal life.

- Plus, once you respond to this first call, there's another call that God makes on your life.

B. The Call to a Specific Service

- I say **specific service** because when we are saved every believer is called to serve.
- Service is a part of our sanctification.
- But at some point, **God will call you to a specific service**, a specific ministry.

- **This is the call we see in the life of Elisha.**
- And just like the call to salvation **it's totally God's idea**.
- **Elisha** did not choose his calling as a prophet; **God chose it for him**.

- And we see **the same thing throughout the New Testament**.
- First, we see it in the ministry of Jesus Christ as **he called his disciples.**
- **For example,** as Jesus walked beside the **Sea of Galilee**, he saw two brothers fishing.
- And he called to **Simon and Andrew** and said…

19 …"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19)

- For these men, it seems that their call to follow Jesus (salvation and sanctification) …
- came simultaneously with the call to serve.
- **And it was not their idea, it was God's.**
- They were just trying eke out a living catching fish,
- when Jesus interrupted their life and called them to be his disciples.

- We see this also in the call of **Saul of Tarsus (the apostle Paul), recorded in Acts 9.**
- His **dramatic call** to salvation and sanctification on the Road to Damascus left him blind.
- But we're not told exactly when **he received his specific call to service**.
- I think it was that same day, because before God sent **Ananias to heal Paul's blindness…**
- We read…

15 But the Lord said to him (Annanias), "Go (to Saul), for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. (Acts 9:15)

- Whether **Ananias communicated** this call to Paul we can't be certain.
- But we do know that **almost immediately** Paul began proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- And continued to do so throughout his life.

- And this was certainly not his idea.
- On the morning **he got up to go to Damascus**,
- with letters giving him the authority to capture and persecute Christians.
- he had no idea he would become one of them.
- Or that he would be called to serve as **the apostle to the Gentiles**.
- And that's the point. **No one chooses his or her own salvation or specific service to God.**

- The call to Christian service…
- That is every ministry from **being on the Tech or Worship Teams**, to teaching children,
- to preaching from the pulpit, **or taking the gospel to the ends of the earth**.
- All of it and any other **ministry comes from God**.
- God calls **us to a particular form of service** to him **in the church and in the world**.

- **And how does he do that?**
- Well, even though the call to ministry is from God,
- it usually comes through other believers, through the church.
- We see this illustrated for us in **Acts Chapter 13.**

[1] Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers… [2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." [3] Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

- It was **the Holy Spirit** who called Paul and Barnabus to ministry (in their case to be missionaries).
- But the call came through **the church**, and these men were **sent out by the church.**
- In his book, **the calling of the ministry**, Puritan preacher **William Perkins** posed this question…

How can you know for yourself whether God wants you to go [into some ministry] or not?

- This is a question that many people would like to have answered.
- How do I know what God wants me to do with my life? **Perkins answered**:

You must ask both your own conscience and the church... Your conscience must judge of your willingness and the church of your ability. (William Perkins)

- **So, it was for Elisha.**
- He may or may not have had a strong **inclination to become a prophet**,
- but his calling came through **another believer when**

Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him.

- Ultimately, the call came from God, **yet it was confirmed by God's people.**
- If we want to know how the Lord wants us to serve him,
- We begin with **the desires the Lord has given us**.

- But we don't stop there, sometimes the desires don't come until we **actually engage in ministry**.
- So, it's important that whenever possible **we step forward when we are asked to serve.**
- **In this way we're able to discern both what we desire and what we are gifted at.**

- And along with that we also **seek the counsel of the church**.
- The pastors, the Elders and other mature believers.
- If we are truly called to **some specific service,**
- other believers in **spiritual leadership** will confirm our calling.

- This is especially true when it comes to **serving as a pastor or elder in the church**.
- No one decides on **his own to become a pastor**. (I certainly didn't)!
- When **Elisha** was called to the prophetic office,
- his call came through **the hands of another prophet**.

- **The same thing happens in the church.**
- When a man is called **to the office of teaching or being an elder**,
- the elders of the church come forward to lay their hands upon him in prayer.
- In effect, they are casting their **mantle on him**.
- This symbolic act shows that **the call to ministry comes from God, through the church.**

- Okay so we've learned that **Elisha was called by God, by Divine Edict.**
- and that all Christians are called by God both to **Salvation and Sanctification**
- **And to a Specific Service**.
- **Then second,** from Elisha, we learn the **cost of God's call**…

2. Elisha's Call Meant Deserting Everything

- Elisha's answer to God's call teaches us a second lesson.
- **Answering God's Call Means a Willingness to Desert Everything**
- Elisha's response to the call of God was immediate.
- He leaped at the chance to follow Elijah:

20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah… (1 Kings 19:20)

- This seems to be a picture of the perfect response to God's call.
- But then things get a little confusing, as **Elisha says…**

and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." (1 Kings 19:20)

- **Is Elisha hesitating**, is he questioning God's call?
- Is he trying in some way to **delay his decision**?
- Elijah's response is equally strange…

And he said to him, 'Go back again, for what have I done to you?' " (1 Kings 19:20)

- Now what does this mean?
- Well, Elijah was probably saying something like this:
- *Go ahead. I haven't done anything to stop you from going back home.*

- Now this verse is especially hard to understand if we know the Gospel of Luke,
- where a man comes up to Jesus and says,

61 …"I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." (Luke 9:61)

- The man seems to be making the same request that Elisha made,
- but Jesus gives him a very different answer….

62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62)

- By mentioning the plow, Jesus may be reminding us of Elisha.
- Did Jesus think it was wrong, therefore, for Elisha to bid farewell to his parents?
- **Well, I don't think so.**

- But how do we explain the apparent discrepancy between **Luke and 1 Kings**?
- Well, the best answer I found came from **Pastor Roger Ellsworth,**
- In his book **"Standing for God: The Story of Elijah**" he writes…

The answer has to lie within the hearts of the two men. Elijah knew Elisha's request came from a heart that was eager to follow, while Jesus knew this other man's request came from a heart which was reluctant to follow. To go home and bid farewell was for Elisha the way to show he was making a radical break with his old life and giving himself his new task. That is why, in the process of bidding farewell, he actually slaughtered a team of oxen and barbecued them on a bonfire... The man with whom Jesus was dealing, however,... [wanted] to discuss and deliberate with his family over whether he was doing the right thing. He had obviously not yet been seized by the same spirit which gripped Elisha—the spirit of willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the call. (Roger Ellsworth)

- In other words, the man whom Jesus met was trying to bargain for time.
- He wanted to **put off God's call**, to delay the day of decision.
- And if we **have been putting God off**, then we would be wise to heed the warning that Jesus gave the man.
- **We cannot keep God waiting forever.**

- **Instead** of putting off the decision to **follow Jesus**, we should do what **Elisha did.**
- When he went back **to kiss his father and mother good-bye**,
- he was making a powerful public demonstration of his decision **to follow the LORD.**
- He was really saying, *"Let me kiss my father and mother good-bye so that I may come with you."*

- For Elisha, **going home was not a way of delaying**, therefore, but a way of **following**.
- And to do this he understood that he must not only **say farewell to leave/desert his family**,
- But also, **desert/destroy his livestock**… **Verse 21…**

21 And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate… (1 Kings 19:21)

- Elisha's decision to follow God's call was an occasion for feasting.
- He took **what belonged** to his old way of life and cooked it.

- Disciples **often leave everything behind** when they follow God's call on their lives.
- Jesus' disciples certainly did.

- Jesus called Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew while they were fishing, and

[20] Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (Matthew 4:20)

- Peter and Andrew **left their job, their lively hood to follow Jesus**.
- The same is said of **James and John:**

[21] And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. [22] Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matthew 4:21-22)

- James and John not only left their **job but also their father**.
- We see this **with Matthew** as well…

[9] As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. (Matthew 9:9)

- Matthew deserted his tax booth, his job, his government position with all its perks to follow Jesus.
- **And this should make sense** right.
- If Jesus is Lord, then becoming his disciple, responding to his call,
- means **surrendering our whole lives to him in absolute submission to his sovereignty**.
- And **sometimes this means leaving it all behind**.

- When people asked Jesus **what they had to do to become his disciples**,
- he told them that they had to **leave everything behind**.
- **Everything?** Yes, everything: In **Matthew 13:44**, Jesus said…

[44] "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. (Matthew 13:44)

- Just a parable you say, well how about this, in **Luke 14:33**, Jesus said…

[33] So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple. (Luke 14:33)

- Elisha had plenty of **"everything"** to leave behind.
- **The Scripture says** that he was…

[19] …plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth… (1 Kings 19:19)

- **That's 24 oxen,** and the implication is that **at least two of these oxen** belonged to him.
- **The two he sacrificed and cooked.**
- But even if he didn't own the **other 22,** they certainly belonged to his family.
- Needless to say, a farmer who needs a **dozen tractors** has a big piece of land.
- And so, at the very least, **Elisha belonged to a wealthy family**.

- He was probably set for life, with **twenty-four oxen in the family stables**,
- and given he was with **twelfth pair** that means that there were **eleven other men** plowing as well.
- **These were probably servants of Elisha and his family.**

- So, Elisha was more than a farmhand; **he was heir to a country estate.**
- It's not easy to leave behind **such wealth to follow God**.
- **One rich man** asked Jesus **what he had to do to inherit eternal life**. Jesus said,

21 …"You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." (Mark 10:21)

- Jesus was telling the man to do exactly what Elisha did when he cooked his oxen,
- gave it to the poor, and left everything else (including his family) behind and followed God.
- But **the rich man** was…

22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Mark 10:22)

- How sad, he traded his wealth **for greatest of all privileges and joys**, following Jesus.

23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23)

- And the question for us is, **what are we willing to leave behind to follow Jesus?**
- Are we willing to sell our home? Leave our families?
- Quit our jobs? Give all our possessions to the poor?

- This is often what it takes place when God calls someone to the **mission field.**
- They must sell property, leave families quit jobs and **give stuff away**.
- Often times they **can only take what they can carry in a couple of suitcases**.

- **Now when God calls you**, he may not ask you **to do any of these things**.
- **In fact,** the Lord often **calls us to serve him with what we have, right where we are**.

- But God did ask Elisha to give up everything.
- His calling to serve God **superseded** all other callings, **even his calling as a son**.

- And so, the story of Elisha's call is an example for all of us.
- Every Christian must always be willing to leave everything behind to follow Jesus.
- If we say in our hearts,
- "I am willing to give up everything . . . except this, and that, and the other thing,"
- then those things those places, those people are more important to us than Jesus.

- And if that's the case then you have to ask yourself is Jesus really my LORD.
- A true disciple is ready at any moment to break his plow into kindling,
- and sacrifice his oxen of personal prosperity in order to follow Christ.

- And one other thing, if God does call you to **desert everything for Him**.
- Don't think that you are **somehow making a great sacrifice**, earning God's favor.
- This was Peter's way of thinking, when after the rich man walked away from Jesus, he said…

28 …"See, we have left everything and followed you." (Mark 10:28)

- Peter is basically saying, Jesus we are not like that rich guy, **we sacrificed**,
- we left it all and followed you. **But Jesus replied…**

29 Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. (Mark 10:29-30)

- Jesus's point for Peter and for us is this, **no matter what you give up for me.**
- No matter what you think **you are sacrificing by following me**.
- It is **nothing compared** to what you will receive in this life and **especially in the life to come**.

- So, we've seen that Elisha was called by God, and that his call meant **Deserting Everything**.
- And that God's call on our lives means we must be prepared to desert Everything as well.
- **Then third,** we learn at least part of what **this call involves**...

3. Elisha's Call Included Being Discipled by Elijah

- The last sentence of the chapter says of Elisha…

21 …Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him. (1 Kings 19:21)

- This teaches us a third lesson…
- **We are called to be and make disciples.**
- Our calling involves both being discipled by more mature Christians.
- And to discipling less mature Christians.

- Elisha served as an **apprentice to a prophet**.
- To put this in contemporary terms, he was **starting an internship in ministry**.
- Elisha became Elijah's assistant (or maybe a better translation is servant or minister).
- **Which meant that Elijah became Elisha's master or mentor**.

- And all of this and more is involved in **a discipling relationship**.
- Elijah was **"discipling"** Elisha.
- A **disciple** is simply a follower.

- So, for us, to be **"discipled"** is to be taught **how to follow and serve Christ.**
- Becoming a Christian involves much more than simply going forward at a revival meeting or praying the "sinner's prayer";
- **it means following Jesus with one's whole life**.

- And one of the best ways to learn how to do this is to follow in the footsteps of older and wiser Christians, **which is exactly what Elisha did**:

Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him

- Elisha ministered to (served) Elijah,
- And his service prepared him, **when it came time to take over for Elijah, the one he served.**
- As **Elisha served Elijah, he was being discipled by Elijah.**

- An example of a similar relationship in the history of the church comes from the life and ministry of **16th century** minister and theologian, **John Knox.**
- **Knox** is usually thought of as **the father of the Scottish Reformation**,
- but before John Knox, **there was a Reformer named George Wishart**.
- **Wishart** traveled around **Scotland** preaching repentance and faith in **Jesus Christ.**

- **John Knox** served as his bodyguard,
- Even carrying a huge sword to protect him from the **enemies of the gospel**.
- In other words, **Knox attended Wishart the way Elisha attended Elijah**.

- So, when **Wishart** was burned at the stake, Knox was ready to take his place as a minister.
- He had listened to **Wishart preach** so many times that along the way he had learned how to preach himself.
- **As Knox served Wishart he was being discipled by Wishart.**

- And of course, the greatest example of making disciples is Jesus Christ himself.
- If you read through the gospels, you will see Jesus's disciples serving him in many ways.
- He was their Master and their Teacher.
- And Jesus discipled them. He taught them, He spend time with them, He ministered to with them, He fellowshipped with them and He prayed with them.
- **Robert Coleman** in his book **The Master Plan of Evangelism**, writes…

Having called his men, Jesus made a practice of being with them. This was the essence of his training program—just letting his disciples follow him. When one stops to think of it, this was an incredibly simple way of doing it. Jesus had no formal school, no seminaries, no outlined course of study, no periodic membership classes in which he enrolled his followers. None of these highly organized procedures considered so necessary today entered into his ministry. Amazing as it may seem, all Jesus did to teach these men his way was to draw them close to himself. He was his own school and curriculum. (Robert Coleman)

- And in this way, Jesus was preparing his disciples to **continue his ministry.**
- He discipled them and he commanded them and his church to continue the process, to…

[19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations… (Matthew 28:19)

- Disciple-making is God's pattern for growth in Christian life and ministry.
- To that end, those who are young in the faith learn how to **follow Christ** from those who are OLD (mature) in the faith.

- We see this in Paul's instructions to **his disciple Timothy…**

2 …what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

- Timothy was to pass on what he had learned from Paul to others.
- Timothy had been discipled by Paul was to disciple faithful men.
- In fact, this is how the church is to function, **as Paul wrote to the Ephesians…**

11 And [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip (to disciple) the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, (Ephesians 4:11-12)

- Beginners in ministry learn from veterans.
- Behind every leader of the Christian church there are one or more older and wiser believers.
- I could give you a list of the older and wiser believers who throughout the years have discipled me.

- And in some cases, **who I have also discipled**.
- Typically, discipleship turns out to be **a two-way street**.
- Obviously, it is a great blessing to the disciple to learn by example how to grow in grace.
- **But discipleship also strengthens the discipler.**

- Every Christian has something to teach every other Christian,
- which means that even the **newest believer** can **encourage an older disciple**.

- **This was true for Elijah.**
- When he threw his cloak to Elisha, it was the beginning of the end of his ministry.
- His ministry was not over yet; **God still had more prophetic work for him to do.**

- But from this point on Elijah would recede and Elisha would grow from strength to strength.
- The old prophet had grown weary in his service to the Lord,
- but the call of the young prophet would reinvigorate him.

- God had anointed Elisha to help Elijah do the Lord's work.
- A. W. Pink observes,

It has ever been a great consolation to godly ministers and their flocks to think that God will never lack instruments to conduct His work, that when they are removed others will be brought forward to carry on. (A. W. Pink)

- Now there's more to **discipleship** than **one-on-one** relationships, of course.
- Everything that **happens in the church** is part of our learning how to **follow Jesus**.
- Particularly the Sunday morning message and our small group Bible Studies are meant to make disciples.
- But there is an important place in the <u>Christian life for discipleship</u> through personal relationships.
- Through observing and learning for the life of another believer.

- The church needs more of these **friendships**.
- Discipleship ought to be **happening throughout the whole church**.
- Everyone mature believer ought to be a **discipler.**

- Sunday school teachers should **help their assistants learn how to teach**.
- **Grandmothers** should help **young mothers** learn how to mother.
- **Pastors** should help their **assistant Pastors** learn how to preach.
- Those who **serve should be teaching** what they know to others.

- And most importantly, every mature believer should be discipling teaching training other believers **how to grow in their faith,**
- How to **pray,** how to **study the Bible**, how to **share their faith**, how to **overcome sin,**
- how to **grow in love, hope, joy** and so much more.
- Everyone who is **becoming mature in Christ should become an Elijah to some young Elisha**.
- AMEN!

- So those are the lessons from Elisha's Call
- He was call by God and We are called by God. **God Calls His People.**
- For Elisha, answering God's Call meant deserting everything.
- And for us **Answering God's Call means a willingness to Desert Everything**.
- And finally, Elisha's calling including being discipled,
- and **we are called to be and make disciple**.

- And as I contemplated Elisha's call and the lessons it teaches.
- The thing that impressed me most was his willingness to answer the LORD's call no matter what.
- Think again about what he did…
- He left his family, probably his friends, he left his job, his security, his comforts.
- He became an assistant (a servant) to Elijah.
- All without a word of complaint, no fear or hesitation,

he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him. (1 Kings 19:21)

- It seems that when God called him, when Elijah's cloak covered him,
- he made a commitment to follow and serve **the LORD NO MATTER THE COST**.
- And this brought to my mind the simple yet profound hymn, **I have decided to follow Jesus**.

- Elisha didn't know Jesus' name, but if he had,
- I can picture him singing this song as he left behind his old life behind and went after Elijah.
- Let me read a short version of the song…

I have decided to follow Jesus,
No turning back, no turning back.
The world behind me, the cross before me,
No turning back, no turning back.
Though none go with me, I still will follow,
No turning back, no turning back.

- In just a minute we're going to sing the whole song together.
- And as we do, I'd encourage you to think about **your response to God's call.**
- If you're a believer, then God has called you to salvation and sanctification.
- You have been called to **follow Jesus, Come what many.**
- And you have or will receive a call to a specific service for God.

- The question **is what have you decided to do with the call of the LORD**.
- Will you continue to move forward, growing in faith, growing in maturing,
- following and serving the LORD with all your heart.
- Or will you turn back?

- **Let's pray and then sing this song together as a heartfelt response to God's call on our lives.…**