

St. Stephen Lutheran Church - Professor John Ude - Pentecost 14 - Sept. 14, 2025

Sermon Text: 2 Kings 2:9-14 "And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."" 10 "So he said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."" 11 "Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." 12 "And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces." 13 "He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan." 14 "Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, "Where is the LORD God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over."

Sermon Theme: David, like Elisha, ask for a Double Portion of Elijah's Spirit.

In the name of Jesus,

We don't expect to, Wow, physically see a chariot of fire and a whirlwind take anyone bodily to heaven today, but I pray that we all see them spiritually.

David once commented in a sermon, "My parents set really great expectations for me. They named me David, after God's gift to Israel - a king after His own heart. And they named me Martin, after God's gift to Lutheranism - a Reformer after His own heart." Perhaps we should have given him four names. My father had four so why not? After all, we failed to include a prophet. So, I am going to set before him, and all of us, the names of two prophets, Elijah and Elisha. David, like Elisha, ask for a double portion of Elijah's Spirit.

Like Elijah neither I nor this ceremony can in itself give you or renew for you a double portion of His Spirit. Note Elijah's answer to the request: "If you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you." In other words, Elijah left such a gift to God because only God can give it. Yet it was God who had authorized and led Elijah to call Elisha as the Lord's prophet, and who also gave His Spirit to Elisha. And it was God who authorized and led this congregation in calling you, Pastor Ude. Therefore, in His grace, the Lord will also answer your prayers to give you His Spirit. So, ask for a double portion of Elijah's Spirit.

Seeing the fiery chariot and the whirlwind sweep Elijah into heaven, Elisha exclaimed, "The chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" While we may not have a

physical "Wow" moment like that, yet you, like Elisha, have seen the Chariot of Israel and its horsemen. It is the vision of Jesus riding with all the angels of Heaven to accomplish His marvelous works. Though those prophets have gone to their blessed abode, the prophet's God remains to equip and sustain His ministers. Jesus remains on the throne to give His Spirit to you David and each of us. In fact, He has promised to give that double portion to those who testify of Him. As Jesus said, (Jn. 15:26 NKJ) "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." Jesus added, (John 14:26) "He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." And the Father Himself validates Jesus' promise. Consider Romans 8:32: "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Or (Lk. 11:13 NKJ) "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" So, ask for a double portion of Elijah's Spirit.

God's gift to Elisha was made evident. Elisha saw the vision of the chariot of Israel, then he struck the Jordan with Elijah's mantle, and the water divided before him. So, should we ask for proof that Pastor Ude has received a double portion of Elijah's spirit? "Lord give us a special vision, and let Pastor Ude part San Francisco Bay for us. It might save some a little travel time. No, 2 Peter 1:19 reminds us, God's gracious Word of promise is more certain than any vision. The Old Testament promise in Joel 2 of being filled with the Spirit and having visions has been fulfilled, as Acts 2 tells us, in seeing and proclaiming the wonderful works of Christ. Each of us - Pastor Ude and each member of this congregation - has the privilege of seeing the greatest vision in every worship gathering and of carrying it with us in every moment of our lives. We see the Chariot of Israel, Jesus, coming down to earth to take all our sins upon Himself, cover us with His own righteousness, and, at the time of our departure, part the river of death to sweep us into heaven to be with Him in eternal bliss. We heard Jesus' promises that He will pour out His Spirit to, "testify of Him," to "teach all He has said." When Christ and Him crucified is lifted high above all things, that is the vision and evidence that Jesus continues to give you and you all a double portion of Elijah's spirit. So, ask for a double portion of Elijah's Spirit to glorify Christ.

Some may wonder: "Should we really ask for a double portion of Elijah's Spirit?" Isn't that rather prideful ambition asking to be twice as great as Elijah? Yes, our hearts are too easily lifted up in prideful ambition to say, "Let me be great." We need the double portion of Elijah's spirit to be delivered from such snares of the devil. But no, Elisha isn't praying in pride for his own greatness. He was praying for the inheritance of the firstborn, which was a double portion of the Father's blessing. This is not a posture of pride, stepping on others to exalt yourself. It is one of kneeling before the Father in total dependence on His blessing. It's not a position of pride—your assertion of what you want—but seeking the privilege to serve others with the distribution of the Father's double blessing in Christ. In such great love He

came down for us. In thankful love we will "testify of Him" and "teach all He has said."

Elisha was not given earthly glory. He lived during the dark days of Israel's downfall, calling out to a people who in general would not listen. Yet in the midst of such darkness, the Lord continued to answer Elisha's prayer sustaining him with that double portion of His Spirit. It was only by the Spirit of grace that, despite the general apostasy, a remnant was preserved - the Father's own people through faith in Christ. Miraculously, God even used Elisha to establish a school of the prophets along the banks of the Jordan. So, the Lord has also preserved you, His remnant. He wants to provide you the inheritance of the firstborn. He has graciously established this "school of the prophets," - this chapel proclaiming Christ and His word, not too far from the banks of San Francisco Bay. As He has begun this work, He will bless its continuance. By His Spirit, "the Chariot of Israel and its horsemen" will create and preserve His remnant through your partnership in the ministry of His word, for He promises in Isaiah 55: "My word shall not return to me void." So, ask for a double portion of Elijah's Spirit.

This double portion of Elijah's Spirit is not offered just to Public Ministers of Christ like your pastor, but to all believers in Jesus. "And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.'" (Acts 2:38-39) This "school of the prophets" - this chapel for beholding the wonders of Christ - will prosper to the degree that all of you ask for a double portion of Elijah's Spirit. Pray for that double portion of Elijah's Spirit to equip and sustain you to be a partner in Christ's kingdom work, by praying for and supporting your public minister, and as you are able with joyful faith taking up a task yourself (there are needs of every kind) to serve Him who died that you might live. Jesus promises to equip you with the Holy Spirit as a permanent, powerful, and personal presence in you. This Spirit teaches, comforts, and empowers you to live a life that glorifies God. So, ask for a double portion of Elijah's Spirit. Chariots were the stealth jets of the day - an overwhelming military advantage. Israel had wanted its own worldly chariot force to rely on. But the Lord revealed again and again that He is the One who drives the angelic chariot and horses, which no worldly chariot can oppose. "Wow," like Elisha you have seen the Chariot of Israel and its horsemen. It is the vision of Jesus riding with all the angels of Heaven to accomplish His marvelous works. Listen to Psalm 68, "17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand, Even thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place. 18 You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, That the LORD God might dwell there." Ephesians 4 quotes this Psalm to demonstrate that Jesus, in His ascension, has mounted the chariots of Heaven. He drives them to give you gifts - even a double portion of His Spirit. His chariot lifts rebellious sinners like you and me out of the fire and brimstone which we deserve, cleanses us in His precious blood, covers us with

His eternal righteousness, and parts the river of death to take Elijah, you, and me bodily to Heaven.

Elijah appeared again at the Mount of Transfiguration in his living body, revealing the glory of Christ's resurrection. Christ wants nothing more than to bring you and me to the same. Despite the darkness and apostasy of the world, the Chariot of Israel makes it evident that Jesus is driving the chariots of heaven. He is dwelling in the Holy place of His Church to provide His blessing right now. He desires nothing less than at the time of our departure to lift you, me, and the multitude gathered from the east and the west through the parted river of death to be with Him eternally. So, ask for a double portion of Elijah's spirit! Amen. To God alone be the Glory!