

Sep. 26, 2021 DARING GREATLY: Elijah & Elisha God's Word Turned Loose  
*Pastor Gina Hendrickson*

Will you pray with me?

Oh come Holy Spirit come...bless these words from my mouth, bless our ears and hearts as we receive a Word or two from the prophets of old. May they speak to us today...at this very moment as powerfully as they did so long ago. Come, Holy Spirit come! Amen.

I LOVE preaching from the Prophets of the OT—they were such amazing leaders for God. Leaders who dared greatly over and over again!

Remarkable people who spoke for God during difficult & tumultuous times.

Times that that needed not just nudges...

But some pushes or even a kick in the pants sometimes...

**I think their words also speak for times such as ours today...**

For people such as **us** gathered here today...Amen?

As we've been exploring for the last 2 mos in our Daring Greatly preaching series,

The Bible is filled with inspiring stories of Spirit-filled leaders & followers;

**and** how followers often become leaders—

all by the transformation of their lives—

Which, in turn, helps to bring about God's transformation of the world.

Let us focus this morning on an amazing transformational story

of how one particular leader—Enables the next leader to rise up...

It is the passing of the mantle

From the great prophetic leader Elijah to his follower/successor Elisha...

In a rather dramatic and spectacular fashion.

So with the help of Pastor Jess...hear the word of God from 2Kings 2:1-14—

written 6000 years before the birth of Christ:

**Gina: Now when the LORD was about to take *the prophet* Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.**

**Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.”  
But Elisha said,**

Jess: “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.”

**Gina: So they went down to Bethel. The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?”**

Jess: “Yes, I know; keep silent.”

**Gina: “Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” But he said,**

Jess: “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.”

**Gina: So they came to Jericho. The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?”**

Jess: “Yes, I know; be silent.”

**Gina: “Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.”**

Jess: “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.”

**Gina: So the two of them went on. Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan.**

**Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.**

**When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.”**

Jess: “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.”

**Gina: “You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not.”**

**As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven.**

**Elisha kept watching and crying out,**

Jess: “Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!”

**Gina: But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.**

**He picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.**

**He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, & struck the water, saying,**

Jess: “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?”

**Gina: When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.**

*This is the Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.*

What a great story right?



Dramatic & Spectacular...Amen?

\*And what I'd like to focus upon this morning is not all the flashy, miraculous things that occurred, like: the whirlwind, the fiery chariot and horses, the parting of the Jordan River--twice--, or Elijah being taken up to heaven... as cool as they all are...I don't want to go there.

Instead I want to talk about the mantle...because that small clothing accessory... is the focal point of the story, it's the hinge upon which everything turns.

So what is a mantle?



"He Took Up ... the Mantle of  
Elijah"

Old Testament Lesson 29:  
2 Kings 2:1-9

Simply put, a mantle is a covering, made of cloth or animal skin.

It was sleeveless and allowed for freedom of movement for its wearer.

It offered protection and warmth from the cold;

It could be used for comfort as a pillow or bedding.

A mantle also helped identify you and provided recognition  
that you held an office or a certain status.



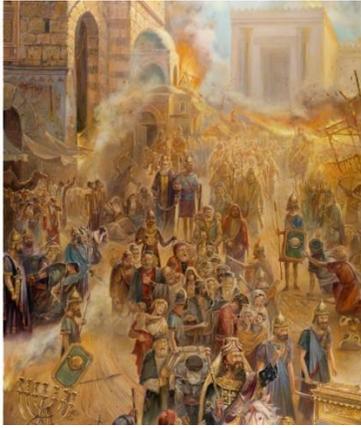
The mantle could also be passed along to one's successor or protégé as a sign of achievement. \*Thus a mantle was an instrument of empowerment for the wearer.

For Elijah and Elisha, the mantle is a sign of the prophetic office;

And the one who wears it...who takes upon that mantle of leadership...

Becomes the **voice of God**.

The voice of God to a people, who as we remember our Biblical history,  
were in the throes of the Babylonian Exile—



Israel & Judah conquered, God's people forced into slavery  
& exile to other distant foreign lands, their temple destroyed.

The people of God needed to hear the voice of Yahweh...

So the prophets become the voice of God—

- To a people in need of a wake-up call...
- To a people in need of a new direction in life...
- To a people in need of reassurance that God still provides...
- To a people in need of hope and possibilities...

The first time the mantle of Elijah is mentioned is in 1Kings 19:19,  
after Elijah receives the instruction from God on Mt. Horeb...  
in that still, small voice out of the silence—

God says to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place.

The scripture says,

“So Elijah set out from Mt. Horeb, and found Elisha son of Shaphat,  
who was plowing. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle over him.”



After Elisha offers a sacrifice and says goodbye to his family,

“He set out and followed Elijah, and became his servant.” (1Kg 19:19-21)

The mantle was ritually placed upon Elisha, as his anointing—his commissioning—

As God's servant under the care and teaching of Elijah.

The next time we ever hear of Elisha is from today's reading from 2Kings, when the passing of the mantle of leadership becomes complete.

We heard today that in spectacular fashion...

Elisha picks up the mantle of the prophetic office...

and turns the Word of God loose on yet another generation of God's people.



The mantle revealed God's power as evidenced when it was rolled up and used to strike the water and made it possible for the men to cross over on dry ground.

It was a very visual symbol that Elisha now had the same authority and power that Elijah had...in fact, he now had a double portion.

Remember, Elijah asked his young follower,

“Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you.”

Elisha said, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit.” (v. 9).

Now, a “double share” is estate language, in those days it meant two-thirds of an inheritance. Elisha asks for a double share of the **prophet's spirit**...Not his property or possessions or wealth...but a double share of Elijah's spirit.

He's asking for two-thirds of Elijah's spiritual charisma, his leadership, his courage, And God-given mission that Elijah faithfully carried out.

Elisha wants to be like Elijah and then some!

The Message trans. puts it this way; when Elijah asked, “What can I do for you?”

Elisha replied, “Your life repeated in my life!

I want to be a holy man just like you!”

Your life repeated in my life...

After Elijah is taken up in the whirlwind, Elisha mourned the loss of his mentor & teacher, tearing his clothes in grief. But he then, “Picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, *His ACTION claimed the mantle...claimed the call to be God’s prophet...The voice of God to a hurting and needy people..he said yes...I accept this mantle...*

Elijah went & stood on the bank of the Jordan before the company of prophets,  
& like the prophet Elijah before him, parts the water by rolling up that mantle...  
And striking the river to cross on dry ground.

Elisha received God’s blessings...the ability to move God’s agenda forward in the spirit of Elijah.

My friends, no prophet in scripture, with the exception of Jesus,  
performed more miracles and signs of God’s power and grace than Elisha.



Elisha had taken up the mantle of leadership,  
and helped move forward God’s vision and hope for a whole **new** generation.

\*What I love about this story is that it reveals the gift and power and opportunity...  
that rests within each and every one of us who claim to be the people of God.

Most of us who have come to faith...  
do so because of the investment & mentoring of others who have gone before us.

The Elijahs’ who walked beside us in our life journey...  
Who threw their mantle over our shoulders to help guide, protect, lead us...  
perhaps only for a season...perhaps for decades—  
teaching us, giving us wisdom, challenging us,  
showing us how God works in awesome & mysterious ways,  
revealing God’s grace & love through their love & care;  
through their words & actions.

My friends, who invested themselves in your spiritual life?

Who spoke God's truth to you?

Who spoke God's wisdom, God's challenge and God's dreams for you?

I really want you to think about that...Who has been YOUR Elijah?

## ***Who has been your Elijah?***

Perhaps it was a relative, or maybe it was a pastor or SS teacher or Youth leader...

I know I came to such a strong faith because of my Grandma Cornelia,

And because of my best friend's dad, Merv Edwards who invested in me...

And from my pastor's care growing up—Rev. Walt Quigg,

And the continuing wisdom from my 1<sup>st</sup> DS & continuing clergy mentor & friend

—Rev. John Janka...

All people, spiritual leaders in different ways,

who live or lived a life of service and faithfulness...

and willingly passed it on...by example, by teaching, by word and action...

to me and to so many others.

\*People who I look to and say, "I want Your life...repeated in MY life!"

A double portion of your spirit!

Can you think of your own Elijah's? Each of them a Spiritual leader, ALL

Transformational Prophets Making a difference...helping us to become all that God dreams for us to be...NEEDS for us to be...Each in our own unique way.

President John Quincy Adams said,

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more,

& become more—You are a leader." Talk about Daring Greatly!

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more,

& become more—You are a leader."

~This is exactly what Elijah did for Elisha.

Elijah inspired Elisha to dream more, to learn more, do more & become more—

That's why Elisha asked for a double share of his mentor's spirit!

~This is exactly what my Grandma, Mr. Edwards, Rev. Quiqq and Rev. Janka did...and are still doing for me.

~This is exactly what Christ did for his very first disciples...  
& is still doing for us centuries later.

\*\*Indeed, this is what every Christian is called to do from the Great Commission given by our Lord in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus said:

*"All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me,  
GO therefore and make disciples of all nations,  
Baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.  
And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Mt 28:18ff)

The Great Commission is like so many of the great OT prophetic call stories.  
GO therefore and make disciples!! Dare Greatly and GO!

Each and every one of us who claim Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior,  
takes up this calling; this great commissioning...  
To Pick up this mantle of leadership...to GO and Serve in His name.

**\*\*To Go inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more,  
become more... in Christ's name.**

The mantle that surrounds us and empowers us was given by Christ Himself...  
The Gift of the Holy Spirit.



The Holy Spirit as the mantle of Christ allows for **freedom of movement**—

We can serve each in our own unique way...free to teach, love, give & help transform the world as our gifts & passions allow...

The Holy Spirit of God allows for **protection and comfort**—

When we need it the most...when we're disheartened or frightened...

In trouble or in pain...in need of forgiveness and grace...

We can surround ourselves with Christ's mantle of love and peace.

This Mantle of the Holy Spirit of the Lord provides us with our **identity**—

The Spirit's living presence unites us as brothers and sisters of Christ,

Here...and as part of a long, rich history of all the people of God

as revealed through both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures

and through our history as the Church...

And finally this mantle is an **instrument of empowerment**—

To be used to help make a difference to a hurting and needy world...

And to transform the lives of those who are to follow us...

To pick up the mantle of the Lord...

is to serve Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit,

and to turn the Word of God loose on yet another new generation. *Pause*

~SO...What does this look like for us here at First Church?



- A church coming through change and transition?
- A church emerging ever so slowly out of a pandemic?
- A church needing to find new ways to turn the Word of God loose
  - On a new generation?
- A church developing a process to claim God's vision for right here, right now!

My friends, this is what we as a church are called to do...What each of us is called to do...And anyone who claims it...who takes upon that mantle of leadership... Becomes the voice of God—

The voice of God—

- To a people in need of a wake- up call...
- To a people in need of a new direction in life...
- To a people in need of reassurance that God still provides...
- To a people in need of hope and possibilities...

May we, like Elisha so long ago,

like so many of our spiritual forefathers and mothers in ages past,

like so many of the saints of this faith family at the First UMC of Moorestown,

May we—Daring Greatly—ask boldly, confidently...

“Lord, give us a double share of the Spirit of those who have gone before us...

Of our spiritual mentors and leaders...

A Double share of their courage...of their spiritual charisma...

Of their leadership...of their faithfulness...so we may

Inspire others to dream more, to learn more, to do more and to become more...

To entice others to say, “I want your life...repeated in my life.”

To live as holy men and women...leaders, prophets, disciples...

Who reveal how God’s transformational power is unstoppable...

And always being born anew into everyday ordinary people—

Like you here today, like you at home and me.

So a whole new generation can know and experience the love of Jesus Christ!

Come, Holy Spirit come! May it be so. Amen and amen.

Amen and amen.