

God's Prophetic Voice  
2 Kings 2:1-18 (6/15)

We have headed into the time when the kingdom of David and Solomon is split. It's a long story, but it really has to do with leaders and people **not sticking to their covenant with God**. They were to be **his special people** and he was to be **God in their midst making them an example** to all people. **Solomon started to get off track with all of his foreign wives**. Then came **Rehoboam, his son**, who decides to ride the people so hard through **taxes and labor** that **ten tribes split off creating the Northern Kingdom, which is called Israel**. Judah and one other tribe, Benjamin, remained faithful to the house of David.

**This is disastrous! The northern kingdom goes off the rails** quickly choosing to **integrate other god's** and ways of worshiping from the people around them. **They are almost indistinguishable from the people of Israel in the time of David** and at the beginning of Solomon's reign when the temple was opened in Jerusalem. **Who will speak for God to the people when the kings are not only no help, but they are actively leading the people away from allegiance to Yahweh alone**. This is where prophets become the consistent voice of God to the people. **In the midst of chaos, their voices go out to the leaders and the people, telling them what God expects**. Sometimes the leaders listen and the people follow, other times, the leaders do not and, therefore, the people do not. **No, the voice of God cannot be counted on to come from the leader of the people, the king**. It comes from a few key prophets; sometimes they are called, **"the man of God."** This is what we call **God's prophetic voice**. A prophet would be the **mouthpiece of God, contrary to popular belief** that the prophet is about predicting the future. Yes, this happens, but **they are really about what is going on right now** that God wants to speak into.

**God needs to be heard and the prophets will become the means for hearing God's voice in the desperate, divided, sinful, confusing time.**

Our story today **focuses on two such prophets, Elijah and Elisha**. **Elijah is involved in one of the most magnificent events in the Bible**. He challenges the prophets of Baal, who are a big part of Israel and Judah getting off track. **Ahab the King of Israel, the northern kingdom has done the despicable thing of leading people to worship Baal, because it is the god of his wicked wife, Jezebel**. He has endorsed this worship and most of the people have followed.

**Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to an epic prayer battle**. Each is to pray to their god, who is to bring down fire from heaven. As the story goes, the prophets of Baal fail to the point of exhaustion and even cutting themselves. **Elijah prays and God brings down fire from heaven burning up the**

offering. **In a wave of momentum, he kills all of the prophets of Baal.** He then prays and **the drought ends in a rainstorm.**

**Pretty big win** for God and his prophet Elijah. But when Jezebel hears, she **sends the message that she will kill Elijah.** So, **Elijah flees** into the wilderness, off the grid, and begins to moan and groan about **"no good deed goes unpunished."** He has obeyed God, spoken his prophetic word, and even killed 100 prophets of Baal. **Shouldn't things get easier?** Nope. **Elijah is at a real low point, as is Israel.** Nothing seems to change since the wicked king and his wicked wife are still in charge. **He tells God that he's the only one** who has remained faithful when there are others who have not **"bend their knee"** in worship to any but Yahweh. **He's ready to give up.**

**God comes to him and tells him to go and anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat, from the town of Abel-meholah to be his replacement as prophet to Israel.** He has been obedient, but there are some **kings also to be anointed.** Elisha accepts this calling from Elijah.

**Fast-forward over more chaos, disobedience to God, and suffering and we get to the time when Elijah will officially pass the baton to Elisha.** Here's how it happened.

When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup> And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to Bethel." But Elisha replied, **"As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you!"** So they went down together to Bethel. <sup>3</sup> The **group of prophets** from Bethel came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?" **Completely independent** of any discussion between Elijah and Elisha, these other prophets faithful to Yahweh have gotten this message. **"Of course I know,"** Elisha answered. "But be quiet about it." <sup>4</sup> Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to Jericho." But Elisha replied again, **"As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you."** So they went on together to Jericho.

<sup>5</sup> Then the **group of prophets from Jericho** came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?" And it happens again.

"Of course I know," Elisha answered. "But be quiet about it."

<sup>6</sup> Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to the Jordan River." But again Elisha replied, **"As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you."** So they went on together. <sup>7</sup> Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha

stopped beside the Jordan River. <sup>8</sup> Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground! Harkening back to how God had done this at the Red Sea. Now we get to see what transpires between Elijah, the master, and Elisha, the apprentice to become the master.

<sup>9</sup> When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away."

And Elisha replied, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor." <sup>10</sup> "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah replied.

Difficult to do but also it's not all roses once you take over for me. "If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won't." <sup>11</sup> As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup> Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father! My father! I see the chariots and charioteers of Israel!" And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his clothes in distress. He is calling out to Elijah as his spiritual, prophetic father. <sup>13</sup> Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak, which had fallen when he was taken up. So, the baton, or mantel, is a cloak or jacket.

Then Elisha returned to the bank of the Jordan River. <sup>14</sup> He struck the water with Elijah's cloak and cried out, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" Then the river divided, and Elisha went across. Again, water is parted. <sup>15</sup> When the group of prophets from Jericho saw from a distance what happened, they exclaimed, "Elijah's spirit rests upon Elisha!" And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. <sup>16</sup> "Sir," they said, "just say the word and fifty of our strongest men will search the wilderness for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has left him on some mountain or in some valley." "No," Elisha said, "don't send them." <sup>17</sup> But they kept urging him until they shamed him into agreeing, and he finally said, "All right, send them." So fifty men searched for three days but did not find Elijah. <sup>18</sup> Elisha was still at Jericho when they returned. "Didn't I tell you not to go?" he asked. 2 Kings 2:1-18

**It seems like everyone wants to be a prophet who calls the shot, who sees it before it happens. They think it's about predicting when the end will come and yelling at people about their sin. Yes, when speaking God's word, confronting sin is a part of it and to warn out of love. But it is also a message or restoration.**

**And some today have the gift of prophecy which again is not primarily about telling the future. It is about speaking God's words, his story, his Son into**

people's lives. **It's entering their chaos and speaking something completely different, something transformative.**

At its core, this story is about **Passing down God's prophetic voice** from Elijah to Elisha.

**Maybe you've never heard this phrase "prophet voice" before.** Here's what it means. **Prophet voice = having something worth saying.** Worth saying is that it is something that actually helps, that works, that gets the heart of the matter. That's what a prophet does, he or she speaks the words of God into people's lives in a way that can bring the transforming, forgiving, restoring power of God into the chaos of sin and disobedience to God.

**God's people needed it during this confusing time in their history. They weren't going to get it from their political/religious leaders. It had to come from somewhere.**

Into people's lives and into the culture.

**Is there still a prophetic voice today that has been passed down from Elijah to us?** The short answer is yes. We'll get to more of that later.

The first thing that has to happen is, **The right question must be asked.** By the teacher for this voice to be passed down.

**<sup>9</sup> When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away." 2 Kings 2:9a**

"Elisha, you have been chosen and I'm about to leave. The time of learning and preparing at my side is about to end. Now that you've seen what this is about, what do you have to say? Do you really want this? Do you want all that goes with God's prophetic voice to his people?"

**I hear often about people wanting to have a voice in what happens around them.** I get that you want some input, some bit of control. **The deeper question is what kind of voice do you want to have in the lives of people around you and in the culture? Do you want to have your voice heard or God's? Or do you just want to fly under the radar?**

The right question asked by his master Elijah puts the ball in Elisha's court. Because...**The right answer must be given.**

Here's his response to his master's probing question. **And Elisha replied, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor." 2 Kings 2:9b**

**That is a secret code that unlocks God's power.** This can be asked in many ways, it's really the heart of the question. It's Elisha who says, **"Yes, I want to follow in your footsteps, I want to be the next one to carry God's voice to the people."** How did I get all of that from this response? **Simple, it's because in**

asking for the double portion, he is asking for what a first born would receive as an inheritance. The first born becomes the leader of the family.

It begins with humility. Elijah is the master and Elisha is the apprentice, or disciple. He asks Elijah for what he knows he doesn't have. He is submitting one more time before it is his turn to lead.

Elisha calls Elijah "father," a term of respect to the one he is under. It's simple you have got to want to move from apprentice to master. And he is letting Elijah know that he is ready for wherever this takes him. Keep in mind, this isn't like a big promotion. This is coming out of the shadows and into the cross hairs of powerful people like Jezebel and Ahab, who are going to hate what God is saying through his prophet.

That's why he keeps saying this...**When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup> And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to Bethel." But Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you!" So they went down together to Bethel. 2 Kings 2:1-2** He says this three times on three different points in this passage. Was Elijah testing him? Maybe, but regardless he believed that God had told Elijah to anoint him the next prophet to Israel. Yes, Elijah is this amazing prophet who prayed down fire from heaven and killed a bunch of prophets of Baal. He's a really big deal. He's probably on Mt. Rushmore of Old Testament characters. But ultimately this choice needs the final sign off from his boss. **God's presence and power confirm...** That Elisha is to receive the prophet voice of God.

The chariot is visible to Elisha confirming that God has made his presence known to Elisha as he did with Elijah. He saw what is happening around God's people, but they don't have the eyes to see it. Elisha got to see that which confirms that his time has come.

**Signs of the kingdom...** These are signs of the transforming power of God in people's lives. Not power for a show, but power that changes the ones he loves. Our simple definition of the Kingdom of God is...the restoration of God's loving rule over all things. Signs of how things are in heaven happening on earth.

Another way to say this is found in Revelations 21:5. **And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true." Revelations 21:5**



- When God jumps off the pages of the Bible and you know he's communicating with you.
- When someone is healed either mentally or emotionally.
- When brokenness and weakness become powerful for others.
- When relationships that are damaged or broken are healed.
- When God uses his church to change a corner of the world.
- When God is praised and recognized as good by unbelievers.
- When someone puts their faith in Christ and repents.

These are all signs of the kingdom where God's authority is being restored and he is making something new again.

These are confirmation that it was God's prophetic voice!

And, in this case, seeing God's power and authority passing by you and being passed to you, is even better when others see it confirmed. No, I don't think anyone else save Elijah, say the chariots, but the band of prophets saw the effects. <sup>15</sup> When the group of prophets from Jericho saw from a distance what happened, they exclaimed, "Elijah's spirit rests upon Elisha!" And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. 2 Kings 2:15

The prophets who meet Elisha after crossing the river recognize that he is now the man. They can't find Elijah confirms to the band of prophets.

People can see that God's anointing is upon Elisha and they don't have to pine away to the good ole days when Elijah was God's prophet voice to Israel. Elisha has the goods. There's a lot of pining away going on in the American Church! Where there is a positive affirmation, there is a negative warning. That's for prophets and regular people like us. God's presence and power confirm that Elisha will now speak God's words to Israel as Elijah did. But here's the warning...but fear will nullify prophetic messages.

Remember back when Elijah was sulking in the wilderness, bemoaning the belief that he was the only one who had remained faithful to Yahweh? Elijah had to get over the idea that he was the only one. That idea is what we call scarcity thinking. <sup>14</sup> He replied again, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too." 1 Kings 19:14

He looks at the math and what God wants to happen isn't adding up. The facts scream, "We are losing." That brings fear and depression. He had to get up and go, find Elisha and the others who had remained faithful to Yahweh. He needed to know that no matter who says they want to kill him, that can't stop what God has already set in motion, no matter how things look.

Let me say that again; for us today in a very sinful, wicked, confusing, chaotic time...nothing can stop what God has already set into motion. Fear can also come out as anger when we want to lash out and hurt our enemies or perceived enemies. It might also be arrogance which is the opposite of the submission Elisha demonstrated. Neither fear nor arrogance have a place in the prophetic voice.

Here is the verse about fear. **Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. 1 John 4:18** Love being perfected in me is when I love my enemies and don't want to hurt them and love God so much that I don't want to displease him.

One more time, there is nothing that can stop what God has set into motion. Here's what that means. **Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. Matthew 16:8** The gates of hell cannot stop what God wants to do through those who have prophesied unconditional allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Ok, preacher. That is all very interesting, now show me who amongst us is the prophetic voice of God. Because if that lineage ends with superheroes like Elijah and Elisha then it doesn't mean much to me in my life today. Well, it should. Why? Because it appears that God is losing in our country. And not only that, but people all around us want us to be afraid. They want that fear to go to the only place that can really change things and that is who gets elected president.

The first thing about God's prophetic voice is that it isn't waiting on a new king or a new president. It isn't waiting on the supreme court. The prophetic voice of God through Jesus continues and cannot be stopped.

This comes to those who ask the right question of those around them. It comes to those who answer that they want to speak and live God's truth in front of a non-believing world even if things don't get better and no one cheers them. And yes, God will confirm the prophetic voice of his ordinary people through signs of this transforming power, his kingdom coming, and what is old and broken being made new.

### Steps of obedience

1. Do you want to speak Jesus into people's lives?

**<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. <sup>15</sup> Instead, we will speak the**

truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. Ephesians 4:14-15

There's a million reasons to pass the buck on this one. "

"It's the church's job."

"It's the pastor's job."

"It's God's job because this is a private, personal thing between each person and God."

And there are a million reasons to lash out in anger at those who are lost, deceived and confused as they live outside God's grace.

1. I need to ask \_\_\_\_\_ this question?

"Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away."

1. Ask God to give Eagle Ridge a prophetic voice into our culture.

We are going to take some time together to pray for our prophetic voice as a faith community, as a church in both Midland County and Gladwin County. In Uganda, at the Mall through Cultivate and in Sanford with our partner church, Meridian.

Who else will speak into the culture about \_\_\_\_\_. Tag we are it.

How do we do it? Based on love for God and other people, not on the basis of being right. Not dependent upon politics and which way it will go. Ahab and Jezebel could not stop it or make it go away. The prophets and those who obeyed the covenant did.

Elijah and Elisha weren't hiding in the shadows waiting for the right king to be in power. They went out and spoke into the culture, not waiting for government leaders to do it for them. This is one of the reasons people don't like us. We have sold out to political leaders and given up on our prophetic voice. God gave that to us, not to the president or the supreme court.

We don't need to send 50 men out to look for the next great leader. God will pass down his prophetic voice through the ones who ask the right questions and to the ones who give the right answer. Regular people "in whom Christ dwells and know that they live in his unshakable kingdom."