

## Reflection for the 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year C

There are similarities between the call of Elijah to Elisha and Jesus call to his disciples. First there's the issue of pronunciation. Elijah is pronounced, "Eeleyejah," and Elisha is pronounced, "Eeleyeshah." The only difference between the sound of the two names is j and sh. In English this is on purpose. Elisha received Elijah's mantle or cloak. He also received as a parting gift from Elijah a three-fold portion of his spirit. Elisha replaced Elijah as God's prophet. This is different from the disciples of Jesus. We carry on the mission of Jesus and can never replace him as Messiah and Lord. We remain disciples.

God revealed to Elijah the identity of Elisha to become a prophet to replace the departing Elijah. The biblical text does not state how Elijah received this knowledge. We carry on Jesus mission whereas Elisha had his own as God's prophet. We have received the Holy Spirit as God's gift to us for our mission. Elisha received Elijah's mantle and three-fold portion of Elijah's spirit as God's gifts for his. The differences are profoundly different. Only the urgency of God's call is the same.

There's some cultural context to this story that we need to know. Jews and Samaritans worship God. They are both descendants of Abraham. Samaria was the capitol of the northern kingdom Israel. Jerusalem was the capitol of the southern, Judah. Israel was overrun and defeated by the Assyrians and carried off into Diaspora some one hundred years before Judah was defeated and captured by the Babylonians. People migrated back to Israel over centuries and Judah was restored by edict of King Cyrus of the Persians on a specific date. We can think of today's Jews and Samaritans as we think of our separated Christian Churches; Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox.

Jesus seemed to know this and respect them as, if not brothers and sisters in faith, cousins who also worship God. Each group claimed then and claims now to be the one, true and only chosen people of God. We Christians do the same thing. In the Holy Land at Easter the Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christians can break into fistcuffs when their triumphal Easter processions meet on the way to the holy shrines. It's a living scandal to see the churches fighting to prove that God loves them the best. The refrain of the sixties hymn, "And they'll know we are Christians by our love," is more irony than fact.

The brothers James and John earned their nickname, sons of thunder, with their desire for God to burn the Samaritan town off the face of the earth for rejecting them and Jesus. Jesus rebuked them for their hubris and desire for vengeance. They would be welcomed elsewhere. God would provide. Accepting others despite being different is a lesson for us all. Was Jesus just being tolerant or was he, as God, eternal, infinite and unconditional love? I believe the latter.

Why was Jesus so determined? What was the urgency to journey to Jerusalem? Jesus' mission was not to preach, teach and work wonders. His mission was the cross. He was to be lifted upon it and die, taking our sins with him. With his messy death, Jesus triumphed over sin, evil and death. God won by dying in our place. Easter was the sign of the cross's efficacy. Jesus rose from the dead.

Regarding the urgency of Jesus call, he seemed today to be a killjoy. He seemed to be discouraging any potential follower by mentioning the worst case situations and a not so subtle threat. To the first, Jesus spoke the truth about his mission. Jesus could have no rest until it was over. This was for the benefit of us who hear Jesus' words. Our mission may be as relentless as was Jesus' for we bring Jesus to all we meet. Our witness to faith is always on-going.

To the second potential follower, Jesus responded with what sounds heartless to a man who may have just lost a father, "Let the dead bury the dead!" However there's some cultural context to that we will miss. An eldest son, in first century Palestine, had an obligation to tend and assist in his father's business. Only after the old man died was he free to pursue his own plans and agenda. This guy's father was likely still young and vigorous to live many more years. That puts another slant on Jesus' remarks.

The final potential follower of Jesus wanted to say goodbye to his family before committing to follow Jesus. Jesus knew that once home, a family's influence could likely pressure the guy to stay home. This mission of Jesus, an itinerant preacher and healer, would seem a fool's errand to a respectable Jewish family. Jesus, in this passage, knew his disciples and his cultures tendencies and distractions.

This leaves Paul's letter to the Galatians. For Freedom Jesus set us free. Take not, again, the yoke of slavery. He's speaking of avoiding sin; isn't he? Not at all. There's a context to Paul's words. The division among the believers in Jesus was with the Mosaic Law. There are more than six hundred rules and regulations in it that people had to follow. They regulated what people ate, what they wore and how they were to pray.

Paul summed up the Law in one statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Loving God, the first part of the greatest commandment, was a given to Paul as basic to this community of faith. For to Paul there was only one way to love God; loving as Jesus loved. It is God who saves and the Spirit, not the Law, that leads us. All people who believe in God and Jesus have God's gift of salvation. To believe this, God first gifted believers with faith. Loving others is how we witness to our faith.

This is the final week that we will remain the Parish of Divine Savior. On July first we will be joining with the parishioners of the former Our Lady Mother of the Church and St. Eugene to become a new and as yet unnamed parish of Christ's Church in the Archdiocese of Chicago. We can do this in hope even as we grieve for our parish that is closing. I stand with you in this transition. I grieve too as I hope for the future. Jesus' call to his disciples was a firm one with no wiggle room. What we face leaves us none either. The merger of three parishes into one is a reality.

This is the final 4:00PM mass that we will celebrate at Divine Savior. Next week Fr. Yanos hopes that the three Saturday evening congregations can gather to celebrate mass at the St. Eugene worship site. Jesus invited his disciples to follow him. Can we follow Jesus there? This is an invitation that Jesus has made to us. It's not a commandment. We have a choice to accept it or reject it. My question is can you accept his invitation to follow? In a few weeks, I'll be there to celebrate the 5:00PM mass. As I said, I'm part of this transition too. I look forward to seeing all our Divine Savior friends at these masses as we all work to build a new home. We are Jesus'

disciples who have inherited the mission entrusted to the apostles. Can we, who have heard the words of Paul, act in God's love to love each other as brothers and sisters, made one in Jesus? The invitation and choice is ours.

May we know holiness with God in our midst.

James D. Beath  
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FIRST READING: 1Kings 19:16b, 19-21

A reading from the first Book of Kings:

The Lord said to Elijah: "You shall anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah, as prophet to succeed you." Elijah set out and came upon Elisha, son of Shaphat, as he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following the twelfth. Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak over him. Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, "Please, let me kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you." Elijah answered, "Go back! Have I done anything to you?" Elisha left him, and taking the yoke of oxen, slaughtered them; he used the plowing equipment for fuel to boil their flesh, and gave it to his people to eat. Then Elisha left and followed Elijah as his attendant.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL: Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

***You are my inheritance, O Lord.***

Keep me, O God, for in you I take refuge; I say to the Lord, "My Lord are you. O Lord, my allotted portion and my cup, you it is who hold fast my lot."

***You are my inheritance, O Lord.***

I bless the Lord who counsels me; even in the night my heart exhorts me. I set the Lord ever before me; with him at my right hand I shall not be disturbed.

***You are my inheritance, O Lord.***

Therefore my heart is glad and my soul rejoices, my body, too, abides in confidence because you will not abandon my soul to the netherworld, nor will you suffer your faithful one to undergo corruption.

***You are my inheritance, O Lord.***

You will show me the path to life, fullness of joys in your presence, the delights at your right hand forever.

***You are my inheritance, O Lord.***

SECOND READING: Galatians 5:1, 13-18

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Galatians:

Brothers and sisters: For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery. For you were called for freedom, brothers and sisters. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*. But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another. I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh. For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want. But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL: Luke 9:51-62

+ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke:

When the days for Jesus' being taken up were fulfilled, he resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers ahead of him. On the way they entered a Samaritan village to prepare for his reception there, but they would not welcome him because the destination of his journey was Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they journeyed to another village. As they were proceeding on their journey someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head." And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." To him Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

The Gospel of the Lord