

Sermon: Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven 2 Kings 1-2, 4-14. June 29th 2025.

Prayer: Grant us a double portion of your Spirit gracious God. We wait in silence listening for your word. Amen.

Introduction: Elijah was a spiritual mentor to the younger prophet Elisha. They were on a journey together from Gilgal to Jordan before God took away Elijah in a whirlwind before the eyes of Elisha. Elijah left behind his sleeveless mantle for the young Elisha as a reminder of God's mighty presence.

Certain events are forever etched in your mind. One such event happened when I was about six years old. There was a civil unrest in my home country Guyana and our home was bombed. One family with the mother and two children died. The father and son survived. Our family and grandparents with her four unmarried children survived. It was my grand-parent home. I have vivid flashbacks of that night's scene. The damages caused by explosives, the sound of terror in the tears of the people, fear, and insecurity. I am grateful for God's mighty presence then and each day of my life.

Today's text reminds me that God is in the whirlwinds of life events that confront us. We are aware of natural events like earthquake, tornado, Tsunami, wildfire, flood and the humanly made whirlwind such as irrational tariffs and sites of nuclear weapons that threaten the destruction to God's creation. We face the challenge of fear, terror and future insecurities. Where is God?

The prophet Elijah was a leader of extraordinary courage and wisdom. He challenged the political rulers of his time. He opposed the policies of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel during their political governance. Queen Jezebel enforced laws that compelled the people to worship materialistic gods such as Baal. It was Elijah who reminded the community of faith of their covenant relationship with Yahweh. God requires justice and faithfulness every day on life's journey.

Elijah left behind his sleeveless mantle for the young Elisha as a reminder of God's mighty presence. In this space we are reminded of the humility of Jesus and the power of love Jesus gave for us. We ask Jesus for a double dose of the Spirit of Truth and to set us free from fears, illness, insecurities and burdens. God shows up at this table of inclusion with the miracle of healing and justice for all. Here we have the freedom to worship and celebrate the mystery of our faith. Here God shows up in an undeniable way and bring wholeness.

Every day we are facing a whirlwind of the unknown future. It is symbolic act of Elijah to leave behind his mantle for Elisha. It is also true that each one does leave some type of influence behind. You have made an influence on other people. You cannot throw a stone into a pond without causing ripples that spread out in widening circles until they touch the distant shore. It is also true that we cause ripples of influence that widen out and touch the lives of others. It is part of the human nature.

Here is a story: Imagine people are traveling on a bus from Toronto to Bolton and as the bus went by a certain street, this woman yelled at the bus driver, “Hey, you didn’t stop on that street!”

“No, ma’am,” the driver said. “This train doesn’t turn until we get to Nancy Street.”

The woman was obviously irritated and she let loose with a string of unrepeatable adjectives. She demanded that the bus stop and let her off. Everyone on the bus seemed to be embarrassed by this woman and her profanity. Everyone was very quiet.

As the woman stepped off the bus onto the sidewalk, the bus driver said, “Madam, you left something behind.”

She turned and asked, “What is it?” The bus driver smiled and said, “Madam, you left behind a very bad impression.” Then, he closed the door and drove away.

On life’s journey we are always leaving behind an impression. As we go through life, we are always having an influence which touches others. As we go through life, we are always having an effect upon others. It is a fact of life that we can’t live without touching others with our lives. Our lives can heal or hurt others. Our lives can encourage or discourage others. Our lives can be a positive influence or negative influence upon others. We cannot escape the fact that our lives will have an influence upon others. The only choice we have is the kind of influence or impression we leave behind.

What kind of influence are you leaving behind? I recalled one my teachers used to say to the class: “education is an expensive investment of time and money but it pays rich dividends.” For me that’s a good impression.

“And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” The image of a whirlwind is a central message in the bible. It points to the truth that God came for Elijah. God did not abandon or forsaken Elijah. The Good News for us is that God will come for you and me. My seminary prof said: “we are called to preach the story of Jesus. The cross has effect on our lives.”

“A professor of theology told this story of one of his students named Johnny. Johnny was a problem. Johnny was the “atheist-in-residence.” Johnny was the one student always ready to debate the reality of God. At the end of the semester, when Johnny turned in his final exam, he asked in a cynical tone, “Sir, do you think I will ever find God?”

The prof said emphatically, “No!”

Johnny seemed a little surprised and turned away but the professor added, “Johnny, I don’t think you will ever find God, but I am absolutely certain that God will find you.”

Johnny shrugged and walked on out. He graduated and several months later came the report that Johnny had developed a terminal disease. Shortly before he died, he came back to see the prof. His body was badly wasted, but his eyes were bright and firm. “It could be worse,” Johnny said.

“How?” asked the prof.

Johnny explained: “Well, like being 50 and having no values or ideals. But what I really came to see you about is something you said to me on the last day of class. You said, ‘I’m absolutely certain God will find you.’ When the doctors told me I had a malignancy, then I got serious about locating God. I really banged bloody fists against the bronze doors of heaven. But God did not come. I made my own whirlwind to seek out God.

“I decided to spend what time I had left doing something I should have done earlier. So, I began with the hardest one: my Dad. He was reading the newspaper when I approached him.

“ ‘Dad, I want to talk to you.’

“The newspaper came down three slow inches. ‘What is it?’

“ ‘Dad, I love you. I just wanted you to know that.’ ”

He saw his father’s face covered with tears and his father got up and went over to hug him. They sat and talked until dawn even though his father had to be at work the next morning.

Johnny said, “I was only sorry about one thing: that I had waited so long. Here I was in the shadow of death.

“Then, one day, I turned around and God was there. God didn’t come to me when I pleaded with God But the important thing is that God found me.”

And this is the promise which we have whenever we march into the whirlwind of life. God will not permit us to face the whirlwinds alone. God will not forsake us. God will not abandon us. God came for Elijah. God came for Mark or David. God came for Johnny or Jean, or Laurie. And God will come for you and me.

Be steadfast in faith. God offers a double portion of the Spirit to you too! Amen

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