

## GETTING WHAT YOU CAME FOR

A little boy lived out in the country around the turn of the century. He had never seen a traveling circus, and one was coming to his town on Saturday. When he asked his father for permission to go, his dad said he could providing his chores were done early. Saturday morning came. Chores finished, the little boy asked his father for some money to go to the circus. His dad reached down in his overalls and pulled out a dollar bill, the most money the boy had ever seen at one time. Off the little wide-eyed fellow went. As he approached the town, he saw people lining the streets. Peering through the line at one point, he got his first glimpse of the parade. There were animals in cages and marching bands. Finally, a clown was seen bringing up the rear of the parade. The little boy was so excited that when the clown passed, he reached in his pocket and handed him the precious dollar bill. Thinking he had seen the circus when he had only seen the parade, the little boy turned around and went home. Isn't it sad that some people come to church like this little boy who went to the circus? They may come with the intent to worship God, but all they see is the parade – the parade of liturgy, hymn singings, prayers, and preaching. They peer through their pews at all the activity and then go home; thinking they have been to God's house, but yet they missed the main event – a personal encounter with Jesus Christ!

Let me ask you a question this morning, have you settled for the parade and missed the circus? What do I mean? Have you settled for all the outward expressions of Christianity but missed the inner relationship with Jesus Christ? Have you ever thought "Is this all that there is my faith"?

2 Kings 2:1 When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. 3 The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" "Yes, I know," Elisha replied, "but do not speak of it." 4 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So they went to Jericho. 5 The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" "Yes, I know," he replied, "but do not speak of it." 6 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he replied, "As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you." So the two of them walked on. 7 Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. 8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. 9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" "Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied.

A couple of weeks ago I flew to Montreal. Our plane was delayed. I remember feeling angry that we had to wait an hour before we could take off. 45 min later I was landing in Montreal. Have you ever thought about how incredible flight really is – what people 150 years ago would have thought! What I considered an inconvenience would have been a miracle!

Sometimes we can become like that in our faith. We come to church and don't like the song the worship team is playing. We have to wait in line for coffee. They sell out of the book we want to buy. All you see is inconvenience. What would a person from a closed country that is not allowed to worship freely think? They would be amazed! The issue is perspective. What are you here for? Are you here to be entertained and hang out with friends or are you here to meet with the living God? In this story we see that Elisha wanted 3 things:

1. He wanted to go with Elijah – stay here

In 1 Kings 19 Elijah had battled the Prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Fearing for his life he had run away and was alone and exhausted. God gives food and comfort and also instructs him to do a number of things. One of these was that Elijah needed someone to come alongside him to assist and be trained up to eventually take over for him.

Elijah was instructed to find Elisha. When he finds him plowing in the field he put his cloak around him. Elisha responded to his call by taking the cattle he had been plowing with and the plow and burning them as a sacrifice to the Lord. Like Jesus calling the first disciples they left their catch of fish and their boats and nets and followed. Elisha had burned his bridges behind him. Now there was no going back.

When Cortez landed in Mexico he faced severe opposition from the natives. Knowing the men longed to return to their homes he burned the ships meaning there was no returning. They would conquer the land or die trying. Flying a plane means you often will face the point of no return – that you do not have the fuel to return to the place of your departure. You must go forward. Elisha couldn't go back - no matter what happened. The same is true for us. When we came to Christ we were set free. We are a new creation. There is no going back to what we were before, there is only forward.

Now the time had come and God was going to take Elijah away. He tells Elisha to stay in Gilgal but he refuses. Then he tells him to stay Bethel but he refuses. Then he tells him to stay in Jericho but still he refuses. Each time he says “as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you”. Elijah was trying to tell Elisha that it was over. There was nothing else to see. However, there is still something that Elisha wanted.

In our walk with Christ there is no going back. We also can't stop and stay in one place. Let me ask you, are you moving forward in your relationship with Christ or are you standing still? Is there new growth and vitality or is there stagnation? Have you ever felt like the world was saying to you "stay here!" Just be thankful for what you have and stay where you are. You have come far enough.

As Christians we should always be wanting to experience more of God. We should be always growing. Like Rick Warren's story of the 90 year old woman learning to play the trumpet for the first time there is always something else to learn or do or experience. Never think that you are so old that you have earned the right to stop and take things easy. There is more to learn and see and experience.

We can't wait for God to do the work. Sometimes there are times when the Lord tells us to go get our promises. Simeon had been told by the Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the promised Messiah. We are not sure how long ago he had been told this or how long he had been waiting.

Luke 2:25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: 29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Simeon was moved by the Spirit to go into the temple courts. Put yourself in his place - the expectancy that he must have felt in his heart - the anticipation of a long awaited dream come true. Simeon finally sees Jesus and takes him in his arms.

Holding the promises of God sometimes means that we need to move. Jesus wasn't brought to Simeon, he had to go to Jesus and meet Him in the temple. If he had not moved when the Spirit had prompted him he would have missed the promise. We need to move from where we are to get our promises.

Obedience to God's calling in small things often opens the door to bigger and better things in our lives. I know in my own life there have been many crossroads where I have had to choose whether to obey God or disobey. Every time I chose the path of obedience my faith was built. God's promises are out there and we need to always be ready to move. This doesn't stop until the day we die.

2. He wanted the anointing of Elijah - what can I do for you

Elisha would not let Elijah go without him. There was something he wanted from him before he left. When Elijah asked Elisha what he wanted he said he wanted a double portion of Elijah's spirit. He was not content with what he had, he wanted more. He was not even content with what Elijah had, he wanted even more.

Elijah replied that this was a difficult request - but it was granted. We also need to dream big dreams and ask big things of our God. We are not content with what we have, we want God to do things which have never been done before.

2 Chr 1:7 That night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." 8 Solomon answered God, "You have shown great kindness to David my father and have made me king in his place. 9 Now, LORD God, let your promise to my father David be confirmed, for you have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. 10 Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

What do you want this morning? If you go to the grocery store without a list, odds are that you will end up getting everything but what you were suppose to. If you could ask God for anything today, what would you ask for? .

I remember going to the Urbana conference in 1985 and hearing Tony Campolo. It was one of the first times in my life where I really saw the power of communication. I remember asking God that if there was one thing I could have, if there was one ability I would seek, it would be to be able to communicate effectively.

What single request would you make? What double portion do you request. What would your relationship with Christ look like this morning if your passion for worship was doubled. If your desire to witness was doubled. If your desire to give or serve or your prayer life or time spend in the Bible was doubled.

3. He wanted to follow the example of Elijah -

Elisha received what he wanted. He got what he asked for.

2 Kings 2:11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. 12 Elisha saw this and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!" And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them apart. 13 He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. 14 Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. 15 The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha"

Elisha pressed on and received what he asked for. His request was granted. As Elisha returned he asked "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" and struck the water and the Jordan parted. Elijah had been a great prophet and had done many amazing things. Elisha would go on to do even greater things than Elijah.

We have been back in Canada for a few years now. I have had the opportunity to speak in many different churches. If there is one thing I have against the Canadian church it is this – it has grown content with what it already has. It is satisfied with its own level of spirituality.

When I lived in Kuwait in 1998 we heard that there was a revival happening in Brownsville Florida. We took a trip there to see what God was doing. One of the things I remember about that experience was that there was a hunger for God. There is an expectancy the God is going to show up and that something incredible is going to happen. People show up hours before the services and sit outside on the parking lot to get seats. There was a buzz of expectancy.

Many people today have heard of the Vineyard and the great worship music through people like Brian Doerksen that has come out of that movement. Maybe you have not heard of the man who started that movement called John Wimber. John Wimber was converted to Christianity out of the Californian drug culture of the 1970s. When he first went to church he was confused and went up to one of the deacons and asked when the good stuff was going to happen. "What stuff" the deacon asked. "The Jesus stuff, the miracles and all the crazy stuff that Jesus did when he walked the earth". The deacon explained that they didn't do that stuff and Wimber went away feeling like he had been cheated. He had given up drugs and everything he knew for something that was empty and void of power.

Just after Jesus was baptized He began to attract His first followers. One of them was a man named Nathanael:

John 1:47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." 48 "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." 49 Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." 50 Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that."

Nathanael really had no idea of who Jesus was or of what following Jesus would be like. And we really don't know either. Yes, we know the TRUTH of who Jesus is and we have walked with Him for years, but I think Jesus would say to each of us this morning "You think you know me but you could and shall see even greater things than these".