

## 2 Kings 2:1-12 - “What’s Around the Corner”

Pr. Kurt A. VanFossan - The Transfiguration of Our Lord-B

What’s around the corner? That’s a question we may worry about throughout our lives, especially when things look bad. It’s a question much of the world is asking in the midst of so much trouble in our world today and in these United States which are not so united. What’s around the corner when it comes to our struggling economy, our problems on our border, our immoral society, wars abroad, or the troubles in our personal lives?

But, “What’s around the corner?” can even be a worrying question when all is going amazingly well! When parents are expecting a baby, it’s an exciting time, but at the same time they may worry about how they’re going to make ends meet, especially they want to later put him or her in a private Christian school, like ours.

Speaking of our school, we just broke ground last Sunday for a school building, which is another exciting time. But at the same time you may be wondering if we’re going to be able to manage all that’s involved with not only a preschool but now K-8. Besides all this, since I’ve announced my plans for retirement, you’re in the midst of the Call process. What’s around the corner when it comes to a new pastor?

Whatever we’re going through in our world, our church or in our personal lives, our Lord, through His Word and actions, seeks to free us from our worries about what’s around the corner by assuring us that not only has He been with us in the past, but that He is with us today, and around **all** the corners of our tomorrows, as our almighty and loving Savior.

This good news is evident in our readings for this Transfiguration Sunday, and I pray that the Holy Spirit would open our hearts and minds to see and believe His Word, for Jesus’ name sake. Consider first our OT reading about Elijah and Elisha. Sometime earlier God chose Elisha to be Elijah’s replacement after Elijah is called to his heavenly home (1 Kings 19:16). So Elisha left his job on the family farm, kissed his parents goodbye, and set off for some hands on instruction from God through Elijah.

In a worldly sense, that was a big risk, leaving a known way of life for an unknown one. What would be around the corner for Elisha? No doubt Elisha had heard about the miraculous things Elijah had done in the past, like sending down fire from heaven to destroy his enemies (2 Kings 1). These were vivid reminders that God was with Elijah. No wonder Elisha wanted to stick close to Elijah. I would imagine he felt very secure around such a man in whom God was obviously at work. He didn’t have to worry about what was around the corner as long as he was with Elijah.

But now it was time for Elijah to go to his heavenly home. The thought of being separated from his spiritual father, teacher and friend was too painful to speak of. Instead, Elisha cherished every last moment he could be with Elijah.

When Elijah asked Elisha, what he could do for him before he was taken from him, Elisha asked for a “*double portion*” of his spirit. This was inheritance language in his day, which was like asking to be as good a prophet as Elijah—to be able to walk in Elijah’s footsteps.

Since this was something only God could make possible, Elijah told Elisha, “*if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you don not see me, it shall not be so.*” And, as we know, Elisha saw Elijah being taken up into heaven in a miraculous way. “*Behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.*”

Through this miraculous event, Elisha witnessed some of the glory of heaven on

earth, like Peter, James and John when they say the transfigured Jesus. They were given a glimpse of what they had to look forward to as children of God. Certainly a faith strengthening experience! But still, Elisha was grieved by the separation that now existed between him and Elijah, and maybe even worried about what was around the immediate corner for him. Perhaps that's one of the reasons God left Elisha Elijah's cloak, which Elijah had used to part the waters of the Jordan river (which we heard about in our text). Let me read the next verse after our text.

*"Then [Elisha] took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. And he took up the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak of Elijah that had fallen from him and struck the water, saying, 'Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?' And when he had struck the water, the water was parted in the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over."* God, in all His merciful power was right there with Elisha. Even without Elijah, Elisha didn't have to worry about what was around the corner. God was with Him, just as He was with Elijah!

What does this mean for you and me today? Someone greater than Elijah has come, Jesus Christ our Lord! Unlike Elijah and all the other saints now with the Lord in heaven, Jesus was not only transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration, suffered and died on a cross for our sins, rose from the death in victory over our sins, death and the devil, and ascended into heaven, but as God He is also with us today, just as He promised. We come this morning not just to remember Jesus but to meet with Him—to be taught by Him—to be fed by Him. Through our Communion with God this morning, He seeks to assure us of His love for us, the forgiveness of our sins, and the fulfillment of His promise *"I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:20).

Yes, we will experience times of suffering in this life, like Jesus did, especially when we are involved with the proclamation of God's message of salvation through Jesus Christ in our church and school. That's not being pessimistic, it's being realistic. *"Servants are not better than their master"* (Matthew 10:24). But at the same time, no matter how great our suffering, we have the crucified and risen Lord with us to assure us that we have nothing to worry about, because around the corner is our crucified and risen Lord who will lead us through this world and even death, and to our heavenly home with Him.

Part of the reason for our suffering in this life is to remind us of how weak we are, and to, therefore, encourage us to cling to our almighty Lord and His promises. When we, like Elisha cry out, *"Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?"* the Lord gives us something better than His cloak. He says, *"take eat; this is my body...Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"* (Mt 26:26-28). And then, like Elisha, our Lord sends us out to our various callings to do even greater things than He did (John 14:12-13) because He is with us, within us, and around every corner. Believing in God's promise that He is with us, is this world's paradise.

All glory be to God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children's Sermon] Today is Transfiguration Sunday, where we are given a glimpse of Jesus' glory as God and *"the Light of the World"* (John 8:12). But Jesus also tells all of His children who believe in Him *"you are the light of the world"* (Matthew 5:14). That's possible because the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, is in you, like the batteries in this little light.

Without batteries, this little light can't shine, but with batteries it can shine. Without faith in Jesus we can't shine. Therefore Jesus comes to us through His Word and Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to give us faith in Him and to keep us believing that through His life, death and resurrection we are rescued from our sins, death and the devil, and that He is now always with us. This good news is what makes us lights in this world which point others to Jesus [use light to point to the God's Word in the Bible].