

Elisha Called and Anointed – 1 Kings 19:18-21

Elijah is God's Prophet. He has been tasked to speak God's word to the nation of Israel. He spoke the word of God with tremendous accuracy and power. We may think it would be great to have a prophet like Elijah, speaking the clear word of God into our lives – but we have so much more than just Elijah, we have Moses, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and the Apostle Paul – even the words of Jesus. We have His Word – full and complete – in our hands, in the Bible.

Chosen (vs 15-16)

This pattern is very interesting; the anointing of God is not reserved just for the prophet in his prophesying, neither is it reserved exclusively for 'Israelites' – the good/godly people. There is anointing made available for so called 'foreigners' to be used by God where they are for what they are doing. This immediately challenges our belief on who can receive the Spirit of God. We can believe the Spirit is reserved for Prophets – the unique individuals. Or maybe the Spirit of God is only for the really special Godly people. But this passage makes clear that God's anointing is made available for anyone to complete the task He has planned. They have each been anointed to complete the task they are chosen to complete.

You have been chosen to be anointed to serve God where you are doing what you are doing. He has chosen you in Christ before the foundation of the earth (**Ephesians 2:10**). You are there for a reason, for a purpose, and are uniquely chosen for the time and place that you are in. Elijah was sent to Hazael, Jehu and Elisha – Elijah was chosen and tasked. Hazael, Jehu and Elisha have been appointed a task. Each of us have been chosen to do a good work for Christ. No matter how much responsibility you feel you have, we are all sent to do all things for God's glory.

Q. What requirements can we try to achieve, before allowing ourselves - or others - to be used by God?

Q. How can you do things for God's glory in the time and place you have been uniquely chosen for?

Anointed (v 19)

Elisha was in the field doing the same thing he did every day. There is great ordinariness in this moment. God had determined in His Sovereignty for Elisha to be anointed to be prophet before the foundation of the world and yet the moment of encounter is so ordinary. That is the moment Elisha's heart is filled with the Spirit of God. This is not a random moment, this is a moment that God determined before the beginning of time.

This is so often the case that God comes to people in the middle of the monotony of life. Moses was with his sheep. Gideon was threshing wheat. The Samaritan woman was drawing water from the well. God invades the monotony and lives are changed. Maybe it's over a curry in a Southsea Balti House, sat on a bleacher in a Portsea Community Centre, or at your desk tapping an email – the sudden and immediate sense of the presence of God can come.

Q. Do you have any examples of times where God has come to you unexpectedly?

Q. What hope does this passage supply for those we are currently praying for?

Transformed (vs 20-21a)

So Elijah throws his cloak over Elisha – the next thing we see is Elisha 'ran after Elijah'. What happened in the pause? Did Elisha stop to reflect on what had happened, laid out by the power of the Spirit perhaps? Elijah didn't hang around – he'd done his job. Elisha knew the significance of this act – he knew it demanded his all. The monotony of life had been invaded by the Spirit of God. His response - to go and kiss his parents was not unwillingness or disobedience but an understanding of the cost. Elisha understood what had happened to him and dealt with his former way of life immediately.

Elijah responds, reminding us that the call does not come from him, but from God - and it is God we are accountable to. Elisha honoured his parents, knowing this call would require him to leave them. But this action is not putting his parents before God. Rather Elisha knows that God's call is more important – even than his fortune...

Elisha had wealth. Twelve yoke of oxen (24 oxen) – by worldly standards he has got it sorted and is prospering. God transformed Elisha's heart and he viewed his worldly estate in a totally different light. God isn't after our money, but our heart – generosity will follow. Through Elisha's actions, God is glorified in worship and sacrifice, and thousands are fed. The oxen were an obstacle in following God's call – but he took a radical step to follow God.

Q. How can we be tempted to use our 'responsibilities' to prevent following God's call?

Q. What radical steps can we take to honour God? How can we use our 'wealth' to support others?

Trained (v 21b)

Read 2 Kings 3:11

Elisha gave everything to follow God's call - left family, friends, and fortune. For 18 years, his job was to 'assist Elijah' - to 'wash his hands'. Nearly 20 years pass between receiving the call to go and becoming the 'prophet' to Israel. Getting ready, serving faithfully, being a friend to Elijah. This isn't glamorous, it's tough. Many of us are more instinctively like James and John - they wanted to be the 'greatest in the kingdom' – that's just not how it works in the Kingdom of God.

If you are called - and you are - it is the call to serve, always. To give of yourself to help others, like Jesus who came not to be served but to serve. Elisha went on to do some pretty awesome things, but first he washed Elijah's hands. Jesus washed his disciples' feet, and it appalled Peter. Jesus not only took Peter's feet but also his greatest shame, guilt and sin - upon the cross. He has done the same for you. That's our servant King and our example to serve.

Q. How long have you waited for God to complete his purpose? How can we be tempted to give up?

Q. How can we follow Jesus' example and put ourselves last to serve those around us? Why is this such an attractive characteristic?