**1 Kings 19.19-21**

**Christ-Like Commitment**

If you haven’t, I recommend working through the books of Kings and Chronicles as they hold the incredible history of God’s people as God’s faithful hand works out his divine purposes. His “hands,” if you will, were known as prophets–men who by divine revelation made the will of God known to the leaders of Israel, who turned them from their wicked ways, from following their neighboring pagan nations, from turning their backs to their one, true God. But just as Israel suffered time and time again for her rebellion, so the prophets of God suffered for announcing that judgment to God’s people. Elijah was one of those prophets. Elijah served God and his people under the reign of King Ahab, a man who was as malleable as a glob of wet clay. This King Ahab had forgotten who God was for really two reasons. 1) He was surrounded by nations who served Baal. 2) He was married to a wicked woman who wanted to use him as a political puppet, Jezebel. Among all the people and all the voices screaming in his child-like impressionable ears, Ahab went the way of the loudest voices. He went so far as to tear down the Lord’s places of worship, to kill off the prophets God would send to him, to silence any voice that would dare tell him to do anything contrary to his own will. But God, in his perfect commitment to Ahab and Israel, would send him, yet, another voice.

The time is coming. The time is coming, declares the Lord, when your god of fertility and rain will not produce for you a single drop of water from the skies. The time is coming when you will have no choice but to watch as the God you turned your back on as he chokes the life out of your land and your wicked people because you, Ahab, turned your back to him! Elijah declares with boldness and confidence before the throne, but upon that throne sits deaf ears. And so, after three years, a battle is set up. You know the story. 450 prophets of Baal, the god of fertility, gather upon Mt. Carmel to show the world and especially the God of Elijah who’s boss. And as they pray with chants, and hours worth of breath, as their own blood falls to the ground, their pleas fall on deaf ears, the same kind of ears found on either side of Ahab’s head. Elijah walks up to his altar–completely drenched in water, no chance of catching fire–and the Lord of Armies, the true God of Israel evaporates everything on that mountain top with unquenchable fire. This is the God to follow. This is the God to put your trust in. Hey Ahab! What happened? Oh right, God is faithful and committed to his people–so get out of his way.

But now fast forward through Elijah’s journey a bit. Jezebel threatens him, he forgets what God had just done, he flees into hiding, and he falls into severe depression and despair, loathing his call as God’s prophet because he’s the last one left, and everyone wants to kill him. Yikes. Yet, in his despair, as he has fled from his God-given call, as he has lost his trust in God’s provision, we watch as the God who lit up the prophets of Baal, comes to his servant in gentleness and compassion. A violent wind rushes by, but God is not there. An earthquake and fire come through, but the Lord is not in either of them. But then Elijah hears that same voice Ahab heard through him–the voice who calls out, put your trust in me. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am the Creator of all things. I am the redeemer of all people. I AM. Greater than Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech; better than Lou Gehrig’s “Farewell to baseball”; better than JFK’s inauguration, Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address”; the greatest pep-talk Elijah could’ve gotten came in the soft whisper of God Almighty.

But despite the pep-talk, despite getting Elijah out of his slump, where does God send him? To appoint his successor in ministry. That’s what we’ve read this morning. That’s where **“Elijah went from.”** I’ve spent all this time setting this scene for you because something incredible happens here and I don’t want anyone to miss it. While Elisha is working his 9-5, Elijah crosses over to him and **throws his cloak over him.** Pause. Three things happen at this moment. 1) God moves his ministry forward. 2) Elijah commits his work to the one God has appointed. 3) Elisha is committed to God. Let’s unpack those things. The first is pretty self-explanatory. God would continue to do his prophetic work through Elijah, but he’s now given Elisha a sort of onboarding as he makes his way into this new role as God’s prophet. He doesn’t just toss someone into the lion’s den known as Israel, rather, he gives Elijah a mentee and Elisha a mentor. I find this important for this reason: God is serious about the ministry he calls his people to do. It is God who has given his work to his people, it is God who makes that work move forward, and it is God who makes that ministry successful. God is committed to His Work! Secondly, I imagine a sigh of relief when Elijah finally gets to Elisha’s field. As he looks out among the oxen working back and forth, he sees the man on whom he already knows he can rely. The fresh legs who will now learn to do some of the heavy lifting of prophetic work. But notice also, he does so immediately and willingly. Not only does God take ministry seriously, ministers of the Gospel do so as well.

Thirdly, Elisha, the new guy is all in–his commitment is full. The first disciples, Peter, James, John, Andrew often get great credit for leaving their nets behind, saying “bye” to their families, and following Jesus without hesitancy. But look here, it was done almost a millennium before! He goes as far as using all his equipment to start a fire, he makes a massive, I mean massive, steak dinner, and then he goes. Side note, I know some of you buy parts of cows. Elisha’s got a good business going here. 12 teams of oxen, 24 oxen total, which are generally bigger than cows. We’re talking about meat for a lifetime. Nonetheless, his commitment is immediate and full. Elisha goes on to serve alongside Elijah in the ministry, and furthermore to replace him as the prophet of Israel. Jesus acknowledges Elisha’s commitment in the Gospel this morning: **No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.** Elisha’s commitment was made known, Elijah’s commitment was renewed, both were founded on the commitment of their God.

Both prophets would go on to proclaim the works of their God, but evermore, the promises that this God had made. The Kings of Israel, the people of Israel, the enemies of Israel, often misunderstood her for just some other nation, when in reality, through his people Israel, God would commit to a promise that he made to himself, and to his creation long before that creation became a reality. A promise that sin would be washed away. Hell would be vanquished. Death would be destroyed. Through men like Elijah and Elisha, that promise was made over and over again, and because of that constant proclamation, because God was committed to his grace and mercy, because God was committed to you, that promise was fulfilled. Almost 1000 years later, Elijah and Moses spoke with their Savior and his disciples on Mount Tabor, showing them first hand his true glory. And as Jesus descended that mount of transfiguration, he marched up the mountain where he would take his last breath. He climbed to that cross on Calvary to to glorify God, to save mankind, and to prove his eternal commitment to you.

Those to whom Christ has committed himself, are those whom Christ has called to be committed to him. That’s you. That’s me. You don’t have to leave your job. You don’t have to burn up your property and eat all your livestock. You don’t have to abandon your family for the sake of the Gospel. But I do want you to check where your commitment to your God is at. Those to whom God has given his grace, for whom Christ has shed his blood, in whom the Holy Spirit is at work, are those who have the responsibility to commit themselves to the gospel. Well, what does commitment mean? When you ask someone to commit to something, what do you expect? You expect them to be all in. The most frustrating thing as an athlete was a teammate who never stepped foot in the weight room but for some unknown reason, always got to step out on the field. What about marriage? The expectation is that whether life is easy or difficult or cruel or enjoyable, you’re gonna stand side by side through it all. Difficult to do when one spouse isn’t all in. Go home and have a serious conversation over lunch today: what is our Savior’s commitment to us? He died for our sins, provides everything we need, and has made a home for us in heaven. So then, out of thanks and praise, what is our commitment to him? Is it just an hour on a Sunday morning? Is spare change left after everything else gets crammed into the budget? Is it complacency in our growth in God’s grace? No. We worship God everywhere we go, his praise is always on our lips. We give him our time, talents, and treasures as often as we can. We spend as much time in His Word, growing in his grace, and growing with God’s people! Commit yourselves to Christ because he has long been committed to you. God bless us all as we refocus ourselves on the ministry he does through us. Amen.