

“The Spirit of Elijah”  
Mark 9:9-13  
(Preached at Trinity, July 18, 2012)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We’ve been looking at the amazing event known as the Transfiguration; the glorious display of the glory of Christ. He was transformed into radiant glory, light inexpressible. It was an outward demonstration of the glory that Jesus possessed from all eternity.
2. Jesus chose to reveal His glory to three men; three chosen from among those He had chosen as His disciples.
3. At the conclusion of this event they descend from the mountain and Jesus admonishes them to keep the matter secret.  
**Mark 9:9 NAU** - "As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead."
4. The last portion of our Lord’s command once again proved to be a stumbling block for His disciples – “until the Son of Man rose from the dead.”
5. This is surprising.
  - a. They had just seen an amazing display of the glory of Christ.
  - b. They saw Jesus and Moses and Elijah conversing about His coming death.  
**Luke 9:30-31 NAU** - "And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, <sup>31</sup> who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem."
  - c. And they heard the voice from heaven.  
**Mark 9:7 NAU** - "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"
6. But as they were walking together they were disputing the truth of Christ’s statement.  
**Mark 9:10 NAU** - "They seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead meant."
  - a. Rather than embrace the teaching of Christ it was still a matter of dispute. The word translated “discussing” in the NASB (συζητέω) literally refers to “arguing” or “debating” or “disputing.”
  - b. In other words, they were not receiving Jesus’ words on His death and resurrection, in spite of the word from above, “listen to Him.”
  - c. They still could not receive that the Messiah must die.
7. This led to the next question.  
**Verse 11** – “They asked Him, saying, “*Why is it* that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”
  - a. First, if Jesus’ death and resurrection was connected with the coming of the Kingdom with power would this not leave Messianic prophecy unfulfilled? That Elijah would return before that time? In their mind, the prophecy was declaring that Elijah would come in person and walk the earth again.  
**Malachi 4:5 NAU** - "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD."

- b. Second, if Elijah will come to restore righteousness and harmony in human relationships why is it necessary for the Messiah to go to the cross at all?  
**Malachi 4:6 NAU** - "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."
8. Jesus told them that Elijah had indeed come  
 He had already told them this truth once, but they could not receive it  
**Matthew 11:13-14 NAU** - "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.  
<sup>14</sup> "And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who was to come."
9. Now He tells them again:  
**Mark 9:12-13 NAU** - "And He said to them, "Elijah does first come and restore all things. And *yet* how is it written of the Son of Man that He will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup> "But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him."
10. Jesus affirms again that He must suffer. He adds the words, "And *yet* how is it written"  
 A. Jesus was the Suffering Servant, the Man of Sorrows.  
**Isaiah 53:3-5 KJV** - "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were *our* faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."  
 B. As Peter and the disciples presumed that Jesus was surely mistaken, Jesus was not mistaken. This was all to perfectly fulfill the predeterminate counsel of God.  
 C. But to their added dismay, Jesus also states that Elijah would also be called upon to suffer, and this too was according to the plan and purpose of God.  
 "But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him."
11. Tonight I want us to look further into the coming of the spirit of Elijah.
- I. First, Jesus taught that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy – not literally but figuratively  
**Luke 1:16-17 NAS** - "And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup> "And it is he who will go as a *forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."  
 A. But didn't John deny this?  
**John 1:21** - "They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."  
 1. John was resisting their false understanding of the prophesy. John was denying that he had come in the person of Elijah. Rather he had come in the spirit of Elijah – one who would prepare the way for the righteous judgment of God.

**Luke 1:17 NAS** - "And it is he who will go as a *forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

2. Before God sends forth judgment He has often sent messengers in the spirit of Elijah as agents of warning.
  - a. This was true of Elijah himself  
**1 Kings 18:21 NAU** - "Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word."
  - b. This was true of John as he warned of the judgment to come.
  - c. You might also consider the revival that took place during the Reformation as Elijah came in the form of Luther, Calvin, & Knox.
  - d. Or those in the likes of Whitefield or Edwards warning of the wrath to come.
  - e. What about preachers of the Gospel today?  
 T.V. Moore, 19<sup>th</sup> century pastor wrote:  
 "And as the faithful minister of Christ goes forth, it must be ever in the same spirit, calling on men to repent, and pointing to the lurid flashings of that which, when once perceived by the startled eye of the soul, will lead it to flee to the only refuge from this wrath to come."
  - f. The words, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is near" is just as relevant today as it was in John's day.

II. What is meant by the promise:

**Mark 9:12 NAU** - "And He said to them, "Elijah does first come and restore all things."

**Malachi 4:6 NAU** - "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

- A. There are whole ministries built on this today
  1. They place great emphasis upon the phrase, "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers"  
 And they build their ministry upon the importance of men stepping up to lead their children as Godly fathers.
  2. Would the early church have embraced this verse as a charge to devote such attention to this single idea?
    - a. I'm not diminishing the importance of fathers and the importance of their relationship with their children.
    - b. I'm also not diminishing the importance of the hearts of children being turned towards their parents.
    - c. But I'm afraid some of these groups have missed the point.

- B. The focus of this passage is not confined to domestic harmony
1. It is speaking of the transforming work of the Gospel
  2. It is important to understand how this was understood in the first century before we try to apply it to deadbeat dads today.
  3. T.V. Moore again:  
 “Want of domestic concord was not one of the sins charged upon the people, and its removal would hardly be the great work assigned to the Elijah messenger.”
  4. Let Scripture give us the correct interpretation.  
 Turn to Luke 1  
 The angel, speaking to Zacharias, gives us the meaning of Malachi’s prophecy:  
**Luke 1:17 NAS** - "And it is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."  
    - a. In other words righteousness shall be restored and piety shall live again under the Elijah call to repentance.
    - b. This is the call of the Gospel. It calls upon ALL to repent.
- C. The point of this is the Gospel is transforming. Christianity is transforming – Christ changes everything!  
 Turn to **Ephesians 5** (begin with Verse 6)
1. We have been brought to flee from the wrath to come. We have fled to Christ.  
**Ephesians 5:6-7 NAU** - "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partakers with them;"
  2. Christianity is transforming.  
 It transforms our relationship with each other  
**Ephesians 5:21 NAS** - "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."
  3. It transforms the relationships of husbands and wives  
**Ephesians 5:22 NAU** - "Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord."  
**Ephesians 5:25 NAS** - "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;"
  4. It transforms the relationships of children and parents  
**Ephesians 6:1-4 NAS** - "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. <sup>4</sup> And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
  5. It transforms the relationship of masters and servants  
**Ephesians 6:5-9 NAS** - "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; <sup>6</sup> not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. <sup>7</sup> With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. <sup>9</sup> And, masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him."

- D. Christianity changes everything – Through Christ the wrath of God is turned away  
**Malachi 4:6 NAU** - "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."
1. How is it that it is said that John the Baptist is credited with this?
  2. Before God comes in judgment He would send forth those who would revive and reform His people so that they would escape the wrath to come.
  3. John came announcing the arrival of this great transforming Kingdom and prepared the way for the great transforming King  
**Matthew 3:1-3 NAS** - "Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." <sup>3</sup> For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!"  
**Matthew 3:7-8 NAU** - "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" <sup>8</sup> "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;"
- E. This is the work of the Gospel today!
1. Is not a transforming grace that affects only fathers and children!
  2. It changes everything.  
 How families relate to one another  
 How we relate to the civil authorities  
 How we relate to other Christians
  3. The Gospel of Christ radically changes all, young and old.
  3. The spirit of Elijah warns all to flee from the wrath to come:  
**Malachi 4:5-6 NAU** - "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD." <sup>6</sup> "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

#### Conclusion:

1. Do you see how unbalanced ministries that focus on single issues inevitably lose the heart of the Gospel? The spirit of Elijah is not a call to fathers and children. It is a call for all to repent and fall before Christ.
2. We will always press fathers to play the men and take charge of their families, but we will resist being swept into the "Family Integrated" movement where the Gospel becomes overshadowed by whether or not we have age segregated Sunday School.  
 In my opinion, as soon as you begin to have Family Integrated conferences and Family Integrated associations you have lost the focus of the life changing Gospel that calls all men everywhere to repent – mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, married people, single people.
3. In the life transforming Gospel all people are called into the radical life of the disciple of Christ.