

Sermon on 2 Kings 2:1-12 for Transfiguration Sunday 2.8.18
St. Paul's Lutheran in New Ulm, MN – Pastor Scharf
Prepared and Provided

Have you heard Frank Sinatra's hit, "My Way," a song about going out of the grand stage of this life on top, in control, and true to self and no one else? Did you know that he came to loathe it? His daughter Tina said, "He didn't like it. That song stuck and he couldn't get it off his shoe. He always thought that song was self-serving and self-indulgent." Whether he liked it or not it's kind of the theme song for the last 50 years – we want to be in control, we want and need to do everything "My way." But where has it gotten us and society? How do you want to conduct yourself with the time you have left and how do you want to go out of this life? I think Frank was on to something as he lost the love for his own song. God's Word shows us clearly the best way. God **Prepared and Provided** for his people as he took Elijah home to heaven. He does the same for you today.

Prepared and Provided

2 Kings 2:1-12 - 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, "so be quiet." 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, "so be quiet." 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 from 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.

10 "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not." 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 garment and tore it in two.

Prepared. They logged a lot of miles that day – from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan to across the Jordan. Each stop a new test – Elijah tells Elisha to stay. Elisha won't. Each stop the

students from the Old Testament Israelite version of St. Paul's Lutheran School, Sunday School, Wednesday School, Youth Group, Minnesota Valley Lutheran, Luther Prep, Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary come out and tell Elisha that today is the day. All this is part of the preparation God has worked for Elisha. What will Elisha do? Who will he trust? What do we believe when times are tough or going to be tough? What will prepare us? Hold on to Him. Elisha holds on to Elijah because the words he has proclaimed are God's Words. The disciples held on to Jesus because he doesn't just speak God's Word, he is the very Son of God!

On Monday Teddy turns 10 years old. I asked him the other night if he knew what they call 10 years. He simply answered, "a decade," with a tone not quite recognizing the moment I was having with all of this. It goes so quickly. How do we prepare children for living, striving, surviving and overcoming in this world? Teach them to hold on. Elisha said, *"As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you."* This is what Elisha did, except he held to the proclaimer of God's Word long before that too. What is the most important thing for us right now and at every point in our lives – Hold on to Him! What is the most important thing for the next generations? Hold on to Him!

As I was preparing this sermon, I thought, "They already know that, Nate?!?" "I already know that." But then I thought about ways the devil has led me to lose sight of this and loosen my grip on God and His Word. We struggle with this with our love of busyness and "fomo –o no" (fear of missing out on new opportunities). Is time in God's Word reserved only for when it's convenient and nothing more appealing is on the schedule? We would say, "No!" but how often doesn't it happen that sports and activities for us or the kids, much needed sleep, entertainment or important and necessary tasks have taken priority over coming to God's house even for just a couple hours a week. Or even if we do come to God's house to worship or Bible class, haven't we had divided hearts preoccupied with other tasks and worries or seeking more to be entertained than to engage ourselves in the Word, or we just need to get it over with? And why is it such a difficult thing to make my personal Bible study regular and priority? Pastor Sutton and Smith shared the shocking stats a few months ago about the importance of priority of time in God's Word for self and for family. We talked a few weeks ago about making God's love and his Word the soundtrack of each day. We know this. What is our problem? Answer: "I did it my way." Sinful hearts love to deceive us and the devil loves to rob us of God's Word. Solution: Do it God's way. Hold on to him. God has **provided** the way.

Provided. Elisha would not leave Elijah, but talked with him, learned from him what God would have him know. I think it is so cool that when God sent his chariot of fire to pick up Elijah that he and Elisha were not just walking together, but walking and talking. I bet we can guess what they were talking about. When Jesus went up the mountain with his disciples, who appeared with him? Moses and Elijah did. They talked with him about his Exodus (going out)- all that he would do for the world, for you and me before Jesus suffer, die, rise and ascend to heaven. And after God the Father voiced his approval and the cloud cleared, there was Jesus. And Jesus did it God's way – following God's will and Word as he had been prepared by the word to do, holding to God's promises and bringing his prayers to Him in all that he had to struggle through.

And then Jesus didn't just show us the way. Jesus is the way, the way God provided for you and me. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (John 14). Jesus took our sinfulness, our mistakes and failures, our offenses and he suffered hell for us, so that God spares us, forgives us, forgives you, adopts you into his family as his own, and makes you heir of heaven and all God's blessings. Jesus is the only way. He is God's way. Today is a new day of His grace and love for you. Whose way will you follow? Frank Sinatra's way or God's ☺? Follow Jesus. He is God's Way.

It's Lutheran Schools Week. Ash Wednesday is this Wednesday. The walk to the cross and the empty tomb begins now. May God open your eyes to see his wisdom and justice over sin and sinners and his love in not sparing his own Son but graciously giving him up for us all. See the prophecies made good. Realize the preparation the Spirit is working in your heart as you learn from his Word, and may you look always to the forgiveness, the certain hope of heaven and the strength he provides till he sends the chariot and the horsemen for you. With however much time we have left, as God used Elijah to prepare Elisha, as Jesus prepared his disciples, use that same life-giving, life-changing, life-molding Word of God to impact the next generation – teach them in your homes, put them as much as possible before the prophets of our day – pastors, teachers, staff ministers, Sunday school, Bible Class, cherish and utilize your church and our Lutheran Schools - let God's Word –his **preparation** and his **providence** fall to the next generations too. Do it God's Way. Amen.