

**Opening Prayer**

**Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.**

**2 Kings 2:1-12**

<sup>2:1</sup> Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup> Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. <sup>3</sup> The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent." <sup>4</sup> Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. <sup>5</sup> The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent." <sup>6</sup> Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. <sup>7</sup> Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. <sup>8</sup> Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground. <sup>9</sup> When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." <sup>10</sup> He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." <sup>11</sup> As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup> Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

**Commentary**

This episode brings to a close the ministry of Elijah, a beloved Jewish prophet. Elijah had distinguished himself in God's service by opposing the worship of the Canaanite deity Baal promoted by Jezebel and Ahab. He also had worked great wonders in God's name (such as the resuscitation of the son of the widow of Zarephath). Such an extraordinary agent of God could have no ordinary end. The focus of the passage is not simply on Elijah's ascension into heaven

while still alive but also on the “passing of the mantle” from Elijah to Elisha, whom God had already designated Elijah’s successor in 1 Kings 19:16.

### **Reflection**

Who have been spiritual mentors in your life? How did they pass on to you the benefits of their experience and wisdom? Have you been able to be a mentor to someone younger than you? Of what did your mantle consist?

### **2 Corinthians 4:3-6**

<sup>4:3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

### **Commentary**

Paul wrote Second Corinthians after some troubling developments in his relationship with the Corinthian Christians. These believers were already given to weighing one preacher over another and forming “fan clubs” around favorites. Some teachers arrived who were more than happy to play to this tendency to Paul’s detriment. They challenged the worth of Paul’s message and criticized his weaknesses—not to mention the disgraces to which Paul is being subjected. After a member of the church openly challenged Paul when he made a brief visit after writing First Corinthians, Paul retreated and wrote a “painful letter” now lost to us (2 Corinthians 2:1-4). That letter hit the congregation hard, since they had begun to rekindle their appreciation and love for Paul. But the battle was far from won.

### **Reflection**

On what basis do you judge the character and contribution of others and yourself? How might this differ from how God judges?

### **Mark 9:2-9**

<sup>9:2</sup> Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> He did

not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" <sup>8</sup> Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus. <sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

### **Commentary**

Peter, James, and John witnessed the honor and glory that belong to the Son. The momentary change Jesus' appearance revealed the glory that was the Son's before his incarnation, to which he would return at the ascension. The revelation of his glory makes Jesus' teachings on servanthood (Mark 10:45) all the more striking. If the glorious one was willing to set aside his rightful claim to "be served," how much more should the disciples renounce and such claims and seek to be like their Lord?

### **Reflection**

Have you had to cope with contempt or pressure from others because you were committed to doing what Jesus called you to do? How did you maintain your self-respect and commitment?

### **Psalm 50:1-6**

- <sup>50:1</sup> The mighty one, God the LORD,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to its setting.
- <sup>2</sup> **Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
God shines forth.**
- <sup>3</sup> Our God comes and does not keep silence,  
before him is a devouring fire,  
and a mighty tempest all around him.
- <sup>4</sup> **He calls to the heavens above  
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:**
- <sup>5</sup> "Gather to me my faithful ones,  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"
- <sup>6</sup> **The heavens declare his righteousness,  
for God himself is judge.**

### **Closing Prayer**

**Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**