



Beyond Me

John 7:38 NIV

"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

What About You?

This week I have been substitute teaching in a class of second graders. The level of affection they have for me has been astonishing. I gave them an assignment to write two or three sentences about a cause and effect event. For example, I planted seeds in the soil and flowers sprung up out of the ground. A rainstorm came and the creek overflowed with water. One of the children wrote, "Mr. Walkup and me went to Starbucks and we got coffee. It helped me stay up late." Now, I have only been in the class three days and why I entered into this narrative I cannot say. Perhaps it is just proximity, that I was the only adult in the room who could bring the child to Starbucks, but I think it was more than that. Somehow, I made an impact on that student that was significant enough to enter into the story. I was taken aback a bit when I heard my name being read by the child, but it also struck me how quickly we can become a part of the narrative of others. We don't even have to work at it. We enter into dreams, we invade the emotions and thoughts of those we barely know, we impact people all around us. Now you and I must ask ourselves the important question. What sort of impact do we wish to have?

One of the fascinating people in the Bible was actually a sort of "second banana". Even his name is easily mistaken for his more popular mentor. There are plenty of children named Elijah. I have known several Elijahs, but I have never come across anyone named after Elijah's apprentice, Elisha. It is not always easy standing in someone else's spotlight; many become jealous of their more illustrious peers. But not this prophet. There is never a hint of him wanting to take Elijah's place. Rather, Elisha just wanted to not mess up as he took on the critical role of chief prophet of Israel once Elijah was taken away by God in a fiery chariot. He knew that he could never live up to that responsibility if he did not have the same tools his teacher had so he asked Elijah if he might pass them along to him. It wasn't like he was asking for Elijah's saw and hammer, his stud finder or his stethoscope. Elijah had something unique that he could not just hand over to his loyal apprentice. It had to come directly from God.

When it was about time for Elijah to be taken away by God, Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before he left. Elisha's reply points to just what he thought of the task before him and how tough it might be if he did not have what Elijah had. **"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit," Elisha replied. "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah said, "yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours — otherwise not."** (2 Kings 2:9-10 NIV) Elisha, if he was to live up to the high standard of excellence his mentor set, needed, not Elijah's talents or developed skills; he needed all of God that he could get. He had to have every bit of the Spirit of the Lord that was within Elijah if he were to have any hope at all of leading Israel as God's prophet. The wickedness of the nation was too great and the expectation of how a

proper prophet of the LORD was to be set too high for Elisha to have any hope of succeeding if he did not have the same measure of God as Elijah. That explains his audacious request; a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Perhaps you too have felt like the task before you was too great; that you had to have more God than ever to do what was set before you. If anything truly good is to come out of your life, you need more God or you have no hope of succeeding, at least, not at what lasts forever.

When Elijah was taken up into heaven by God, what was left was Elijah's cloak. Not much of an inheritance and yet it was more than enough to provide for Elisha in his life's work. **He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.** (2 Kings 2:13-14 NIV) Right then and there, the LORD became a part of Elisha and all that Elijah did, Elisha could do...and more. Let us be clear about this. God did not give Elisha His Spirit and the ability to do miracles so that Elisha could make something for himself. He did this so that God might pour out of Elisha and fall upon all he came across. It was not for Elisha that the Spirit came into him but for the world that was lost and without a Savior.

The Bible has this to say about every Christian. "You are not your own..." You are not here for you. That life of yours is not to make something of yourself. It is a funnel out of which all of God comes to all you meet. Jesus put it this way. **On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.** (John 7:37-39 NIV) What can be said of this promise of Christ? You do not get the fullness of God so He can stay cooped up in you! There is no power of prayer, no comfort from His Spirit, no guidance and help in times of trouble for you so you can hold on to it and be happy with what you have. Christ is not making you into His likeness so it all stays there with you. You have God so that He might spill out of you and invade the world. He is a torrent of Living Water that cannot be kept in the reservoir of your life. There must be no dam blocking up His Spirit in you.

All of God is to break out of you and come spilling over into each person He brings you. His love and patience and holiness and honesty and encouragement and hope and faith and goodness are all at the boiling point and if they don't pour out of you, they will make you into a miserable little miser who is no good for anything. But if His gentleness and His truthfulness and His mercy and His kindness come rushing from you, you will be the happiest person on earth. There is no good in you that the Lord does not want becoming the good others gain. It is the measure of Christianity, this matter of being a flowing river of holiness and love that goes out into the world and makes it good. Before I took this recent assignment in the second-grade class, I wondered why Jesus wanted me with those same children and staff for an entire week. I asked the Lord to use me as His cup of blessing and encouragement for them and if He didn't, I did not want to go. What good are you if God is not pouring out of you, making the world better, not because you are talented or smart or creative but because the Lord is supernatural, and He is the Savior of the world. This world does not need more cool or successful people; it needs a Savior who can save them from their Sin and if you are available, He can pour out of you and save the world.