

Sermon Series: “Becoming God’s Humble Hero: Elijah”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—9/16/07

Title: “A No-Death Contract”

Text: 2 Kings 2: 1-14

Intro.: Ills.: Cheating Death

Theme: Faithfully finishing the life’s work God has for you to do is all about embedding yourself in the promise of God to complete in us what he began and bring it to completion in the resurrection promise of Jesus.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 2 Tim. 4:7-8

Wouldn’t it be nice to know that we did not have to face death?

- Elijah had a “no-death contract” which God had planned (**Print 2 Kings 2: 1, 11-12**)
 1. Elijah had come to expect the miraculous as God’s norm in his life
 - a. Feeding by ravens; supplies from nowhere, backing up his word with divine responses from heaven
 - b. We have the impression from the text that Elijah was given advanced notice (*when the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind*)
 2. Three examples in Scripture of similar **no-death contracts**
 - a. **Enoch** (*Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. Gen 5: 24*) & (*By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up, for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. Heb. 11: 5*)
 - b. **Elijah** (vs. 11-12) — God demonstrated by one more powerful miracle/blessing that Elijah was his humble hero
 - c. **Jesus** became the guarantor of the no death contract for us by his resurrection and ascension (*“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.” John 11:25-26*)
- It is not trying to cheat death but living as if you have in God’s promise
 1. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . . so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1: 3, 7*
 2. Living with a “**fear not**” mentality (health, future, raising family, work, purpose)

A “no death contract” life-style

- Do not allow yourself to be easily dissuaded by what other say (**Print and read vs. 2-6**)
 1. **Ills.: Town law forbidding dying fails**
 2. Elijah wanted to spare grief but also test the commitment of his protégée, Elisha by leaving him behind
 - a. Elisha lived in the hope of a living Lord who could take the sting of death away at Elijah’s passing
 - b. *“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. 15:55-57*
- Be bold in asking from the Lord what you need to live for His purpose (**Print and read vs. 7-10**)
 1. Elisha asks to inherit the Lord’s blessing as he takes up of Elijah’s ministry mantle (**double portion=1st born right**)
 2. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. 1 Cor. 15:58*
- Keep your eyes peeled for what the Lord is about to do in your life (**Print and read vs. 11-13**)
 1. **Ills.: watching for the meteor shower**
 2. It would have been easy in a moment of inattention for Elisha to miss the moment and miss the blessing
- Act boldly in the power of the living Lord within you (**Print and read vs. 14**)

1. Confident in God's Word and promise Elisha followed in the footsteps of Elijah, Joshua and Moses to part water
2. *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. Hebrews 12:1*

Cheating Death

According to columnist Cecil Adams, of the 15 people who have attempted to go over Niagara Falls, 10 survived. The first person to attempt the feat, on October 24, 1901, was a woman: Annie Edson Taylor, a plump 63-year-old schoolteacher who claimed to be in her early 40s. She used a four-and-a-half-foot oak barrel packed with inflated pillows, a mattress, and an anvil (for ballast). Her ride was fairly uneventful, apart from the fact that she plunged roughly 170 feet over the falls in the middle of it; she was fished out 75 minutes after she'd gone in, bruised and shaken but alive. (She reportedly told onlookers, "No one ought ever do that again.") The most recent Niagara Falls daredevil was Robert Overacker, who went over on a jet ski in 1995. Overacker died because his "rocket-assisted parachute deployed at the brink of the falls as planned, but wasn't tethered to his back." But even those who stared death in the face at Niagara Falls and lived couldn't cheat death forever. Take, for example, Bobby Leach, who went over the falls in a steel barrel in 1911. "The first man to go over the falls, he survived, only to die 15 years later after slipping on an orange peel in Christchurch, New Zealand." **Cecil Adams, "The Straight Dope," The Reader's Guide (7-18-03), p. 2**

Town law forbidding dying fails

The town of Le Lavandou on the French Riviera recently passed a law barring any more burials in the town cemetery. It's full. The law says, "It is forbidden without a cemetery plot to die on the territory of the commune." The law hasn't stopped people from dying. Nineteen people have died without a plot and are temporarily housed in friends' vaults. There is only one law against dying that really works—the law of the Resurrection. **Lee Eclov, Lake Forest, Illinois; from Chicago Tribune (9-22-00)**

2 Kings 2:1-14

¹When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.

²Elijah 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. ³The 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, "but do not speak of it." ⁴Then 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. ⁵The 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, "but do not speak of it." ⁶Then 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.

⁷Fifty men of the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸Elijah 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. ⁹When 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 not."

¹¹As 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. ¹²Elisha 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 own clothes and tore them apart.

¹³He picked up the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

¹⁴Then 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. [NIV]