

Dare To Ask A Hard Thing

Last year on one of the first Sundays of 2018, I challenged you to pray a bold prayer and to ask God specifically for wisdom, discernment, anointing, clarity and the courage to do what God showed you to do. This morning on this second Sunday of the new year, I was actually going to start a new series but I felt drawn to a passage from the Old Testament. We talked last Sunday about the challenge of 2019. How are we going to get through the challenges of 2019? Instead of shrinking back in fear or trying to hide, I want to suggest that we take a deep breath, grab hold of the word of God which is the sword of the Spirit, and run toward the sound of the battle. Let's face the challenge, not in fear but in faith. I want to challenge you this year to dare to ask God for a hard thing. Turn in your bible to 2 Kings 2 and let me show you something in the life of two Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha

As you are turning there, allow me to set the stage. Elijah has been a powerful prophet and mightily used of God in the Northern kingdom of Israel around 873-853 BCE. He was known for his opposition to the wicked King and Queen, Ahab and Jezebel. He called down fire out of heaven, he prayed and shut up the heavens so that no rain fell for over 3 years and then he opened them by faith and the rain came again. The Lord had spoken to him earlier about a successor to his ministry and Elijah had anointed Elisha to succeed him as prophet. Now the time has come for Elijah to go to heaven and for Elisha to become the prophet.

With that, Elijah tests Elisha's determination. In chapter 2 he repeatedly tells Elisha to stay in each city they pass through while Elijah journeys on, but Elisha is determined not to leave the old prophet's side. **"As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you..." 2 Kings 2:2**

From Gilgal, to Bethel, then back to Jericho, Elisha refuses to abandon Elijah. They come to the Jordan river and stand facing the water. What now? We can't get across the river. Sometimes we face a challenge, a hard thing, and we just have to trust God to make a way where there isn't a way, don't we? F. B. Meyer wrote, **"Where God's finger points, there God's hand will make the way. Believe that it shall be so."** ...F. B. Meyer Elijah takes off his mantle, the cloak the prophet wore, and struck the water and the water parted and Elijah and Elisha crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

It's after they cross to the other side, away from the prying eyes and ears of others, that Elijah asks an unusual question. **"Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?"** Elisha answers **"Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit."** Elijah then said,

“You have asked a difficult thing, yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours – otherwise not.” New American Standard translation reads, **“You have asked a hard thing.”**

Interesting. In all of their journeys I don't think Elisha has heard Elijah speak of a hard thing. You can look back at all of the miracles of Elijah. Blinding an army wasn't a hard thing. Stopping the rain for 3 ½ years, calling down fire from heaven, those weren't hard things. Bringing down the house of Ahab, he didn't describe that as a hard thing. But Elisha's request, that was a difficult thing, a hard thing. There are all kinds of reasons and we can speculate. Perhaps the anointing wasn't Elijah's to give, it was God's. Nevertheless, Elijah tells him, if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours. I actually think Elijah was proud of Elisha's request. “Good for you, daring to ask a hard thing!”

The bible says **“As they were walking along and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two men, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.”** And most importantly, for Elisha at least, the bible says, **“Elisha saw this and cried out... and Elisha saw him no more.”** Elijah is gone to heaven and Elisha is alone. But what about his request for a double portion of Elijah's anointing? What does he do now?

I'm sure he stood there dazed by what he had just witnessed, wondering what to do, and then he saw it. The mantle, the cloak that had been worn by Elijah. It was the cloak Elijah had thrown around Elisha's shoulders indicating he would be his successor. Now it had fallen from Elijah back to the earth. It was the cloak that Elijah had used just a short while before to strike the waters of the Jordan and caused them to part so they could cross on dry ground. Elisha picked up the cloak, and walked back to the banks of the Jordan river. From the other side the company of the prophets are watching to see what Elisha will do. And Elisha must have been wondering himself. “I've asked a hard thing Elijah said. Was my request too hard? But I saw him when he was taken. I watched as he was caught up into heaven. That was the requirement, that's what Elijah told me to do to receive a double portion of his anointing.”

Elisha takes Elijah's cloak and declares, “Where is the God of Elijah?” “Are you with me as you were with Elijah?” Then he swings the cloak toward the water and the water divides to the right and to the left and Elisha walks back across on dry ground. And the company of the prophets declare, **“The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.”**

He asked a hard thing. A difficult thing. A double portion of Elijah's anointing. That was the right of the first born son, the heir (Deut. 21:17). “I want a double portion.” A bold

request! I can imagine someone saying, “Don’t you think that’s asking a bit too much? That’s being too bold. That’s being presumptuous to ask for a double portion of Elijah’s anointing. What right do you have to ask such a hard thing?” Doesn’t that sound like a lot of us?

I wonder how many of us have missed out on something God had for us because of that attitude? We didn’t want to be accused of asking for too much – of asking a hard thing or a difficult thing of God. We have limited the blessing of God with that “it’s not for the likes of us” mentality. God’s blessings are for others, but not for us. Don’t be too bold in your requests.

But for Elisha, he believed and expected as Meyer said, that “where God’s finger points, God’s hand will make the way.” Elisha’s didn’t shy away from asking hard things. Ever. It seemed to be Elisha’s nature to always ask for more. To expect more. To trust God for the miraculous because God was God! Look at **2 Kings 4:1-7**. (Read this passage).

Notice verse 3 – **“Don’t ask for just a few.”** Ask for more. Ask a hard thing. Ask a difficult thing and then expect a double portion. Get all the jars you can find because if you ask God, you can expect him to meet the need. If God is miraculously producing oil, filling 100 jars is no more miraculous than filling 2 jars. Like Jesus said, “According to your faith be it unto you.” Elisha expected that as long as there were jars coming there would be oil coming. When the jars stopped arriving, the oil stopped flowing. Go ahead: ask and expect.

In that same chapter is the story of the Shunammite woman. **2 Kings 4:8-17** Any time Elisha was in the area she fed him and took care of him. Finally, she told her husband to build him a room so he would have a place to stay anytime he was in town. And that’s what they did. This couple blessed the man of God and as a result, Elisha asked her, “What can I do for you?”

She wouldn’t dare ask for anything but Gehazi told Elisha she had no son. He called her and told her she would have a son. “No, my Lord...Don’t mislead your servant, O man of God.” It was a hard thing. A difficult thing. Something she had longed for and dreamed of and grieved over. No son meant no one to take care of her in her old age. She wouldn’t even dare to ask, but Elisha would. Still asking for the hard thing, knowing nothing was too difficult for His God. She gave birth to a son, a son that would grow and then suddenly fall ill and die. And Elisha would ask another hard thing and bring him back from the dead and deliver him alive and well to his mother.

No wonder Elisha dared to ask for a hard thing, because Elisha believed that nothing was too difficult for His God. He learned it from Elijah. He had grown to understand the faithfulness of God. Elijah and Elisha both believed in praying bold prayers, they both dared to ask God for

the hard things, seemingly impossible things, because they believed God would honor his word.

And what does the Bible say about asking for hard things? Jesus said, **“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds and to him who knocks the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?”** Matthew 7:7-11 Jesus says we should ask because God delights in giving good gifts to his children. It’s not asking too much. It’s obeying God who told us to ask and trusting in his faithfulness!

The Bible says, **“You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”** James 4:2-3 Have you asked? Maybe that’s the problem, that we simply aren’t crying out to God? We are asking, but not asking God? Not asking with the right motives? May we be bold enough to ask God for all he has prepared for his children!

Understand, I’m not responsible for what God’s answer might be to our request, He may say no or not now, but I am responsible for asking, for being bold enough in faith to ask the hard thing.

Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”** Matthew 17:20

Facing a challenge in 2019? Go ahead and ask the hard thing. Dare to ask God and believe Him and his word. Ask and trust him that he is going to perform his good will in your life. Ask and believe. John writes, **“This is the confidence we have in approaching God; that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask– we know that we have what we asked of him.”** 1 John 5:14-15

Ask the hard thing. The bible says, **“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.”** Ephesians 3:20-21.

Dare to ask the hard thing. Go ahead. Dare to ask what is immeasurably more. Keep in mind what James said about asking with wrong motives, just asking to satisfy your own

pleasures, to simply satisfy the flesh or sinful desires. But I think the Lord would like to see a boldness in his people that would cause us to dare to ask him for a hard thing, so that all the glory would go to the Lord! The Psalmist declared **“Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.” Psalm 2:8** That’s a bold prayer. God give us the nations! Give us Southwest Tulsa!

I’m afraid I’m too much like the Shunammite woman that when the Lord says, “What can I do for you?” I say “Nothing. Really. I’m fine. I can make it on my own.” Isn’t that what she said? “I have a home among my own people.” I’ll find someone to take care of me.

God says, “Ask the hard thing.” Mark Rutland wrote, “...a fear of asking too much causes many believers to ask too little. The scriptural evidence indicates that God is more impatient with the timid than with the aggressive. ‘Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace...’ Hebrews 4:16.” Come boldly and ask according to his will. Ask God for what God has already said he intends to give his children!

What I’m telling you this morning, I’m not suggesting we be selfish, I’m not suggesting we be presumptuous, but I’m suggesting we discern the Lord’s timing, the Lord’s will, and when he says, “ask of me...” that we recognize it as the divine timing and strategy and will of God and that we boldly obey and we boldly ask God for the hard thing, the difficult thing. Ask and believe for that which is beyond anything we could do on our own; beyond anything we could even help him with. What if we dared to ask God like Elisha asked Elijah, for a double portion of God’s power and anointing so we can accomplish his purposes in the earth?

Go back to 2 Kings 2 and notice that all of this was going to happen to Elisha if he kept his eyes on Elijah. In one sense, it would be the final test to see if Elisha could handle that double portion anointing he desired.

If you ask most people how Elijah went to heaven, they will tell you he went to heaven in a fiery chariot. But that’s not what the bible says. Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. The chariots of fire and the horses of fire appeared and separated Elijah from Elisha. Elisha saw the chariots and the horses and the horsemen driving the chariot, but he never took his eyes off of his master, Elijah. He kept his eyes on what he was supposed to keep his eyes on. Elijah!

There will be plenty of distractions in 2019. Plenty of glitz and glamour, plenty of secondary things to settle for, and plenty of challenges to distract us, but keep your eyes on Jesus and on what God has promised. Go ahead and obey God and ask for the hard thing and then don’t settle for less than what God has spoken to you. Don’t compromise, don’t quit, don’t back

down, don't give up.

What if for 2019 we dare to ask God a hard thing for Carbondale Assembly of God? It's not hard for God, it just seems hard for us. Nothing is too hard for him! Why not ask for blessing and increase beyond what we've seen before? Why not ask God for blessing so we pay off the indebtedness? Why not ask for a double portion of God's anointing? Why not ask for a double harvest? Let's ask for the reapers to overtake the sowers. Ask to sow and reap in the same year. Ask to see miraculous healings take place. Ask to see missions giving increase. Ask to see more people saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit. Dare to ask God to pour His Spirit out upon this church and our services in an unprecedented fashion. Dare to ask God to exceed all our expectations. Dare to ask God to fulfill his promises this year in our church and in your life! Ask and then expect it. Why don't we ask and expect God to be God?

Why not ask a hard thing – according to his will. Why not ask God to save your children and grandchildren? Why be reluctant to ask a hard thing that you know is in accordance with his will? That seems like a hard thing to you, but the bible says, **“I am the Lord the God of all flesh, is anything too hard for me?” Jeremiah 32:27**

Nothing is too difficult, too hard for God. Ask him. It's time. Go ahead and dare to ask a hard thing for 2019. Pray a bold prayer! Ask for your healing and expect it this year. Ask for household salvation. Ask for your children to be delivered from sin and drugs and addiction. Ask for a new job. Ask God for that difficult thing. Go ahead and be bold. Ask and believe for the miraculous in your life. Ask and believe for a double portion of his anointing upon this church. Upon your life. Nothing is too hard for God. Dare to ask a hard thing and watch and see what God will do!