

Something unusual captured the world's imagination at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney Australia. You may recall the surprising word hanging from the Sydney Harbour Bridge unveiled at the opening ceremony. When the torch was lit to launch the games the background was illumined by fireworks. Just then a massive sign that hung on the bridge flashed to brilliance, and in a moment people around the globe read what God has placed inside each of us.

The word was Eternity. It's such a strange word to be associated with a non-religious event.

What does that word mean to you?

According to Ecclesiastes 3:11a, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity into man's heart."

3000 years before the 2000 Olympics a man named Solomon in the Bible wrestled with this word. He was the richest man of all time and yet he wasn't happy and could find no satisfaction out of life. He had it all. He had money, sex and power. And in the end these were his words:

"So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. He eventually came to the conclusion that God had put eternity into man's heart and only what is done with eternity in mind will bring ultimate satisfaction

It is this spirit that I hope will captivate you today.

Today is the last in a series of four messages that revolve around the calling and early ministry of Elisha the prophet.

Today it may be that God is calling you to do something bigger than you can imagine yourself being able to do.

You may have been thinking for the last few weeks about what God wants you to do. For some of you it may be a bigger thing than what you want to deal with.

Let's examine today the reality of doing things for God, which we know we can not do by ourselves. "With God all things are possible" is more than just a cute phrase. It is more than just a nice line. It is fact. It is reality. With God's help through the power of His Holy Spirit we can do anything. There is nothing that we can't do.

Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River. ⁸ Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground!

⁹ *When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away.”*

And Elisha replied, “Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit and become your successor.”

¹⁰ *“You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah replied. “If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won’t.”*

¹¹ *As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between the two men, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² Elisha saw it and cried out, “My father! My father! I see the chariots and charioteers of Israel!” And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his clothes in distress.*

¹³ *Elisha picked up Elijah’s cloak, which had fallen when he was taken up. Then Elisha returned to the bank of the Jordan River. ¹⁴ He struck the water with Elijah’s cloak and cried out, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” Then the river divided, and Elisha went across. 2 Kings 2:7-14 NLT*

Elijah asked Elisha a very important question right before he and Elisha knew he was about to be taken from this earth. He offered to help in whatever way Elisha needed. It is these kinds of occasions that can be most revealing about the character of someone. This was a test of Elisha’s character and values.

His primary desire leaps from his mouth before he even has time to think about it: “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” or “a double share of your spirit.”

Elisha’s desire to succeed Elijah was no glamorous or appealing choice during the Omri dynasty. It basically meant your life could and probably would be in danger if you faithfully delivered God’s messages.

It is no light thing to ask God to allow you to be a part of a ministry. When Christ left this earth He had one intention for His followers and that was that we would tell His story. He commissioned us to tell it.

We tell it in many ways.

We tell it through sermons, teaching and songs.

We tell it through living lives that are pleasing to God.

We tell it by sharing our own story of giving our lives to Christ

We tell it through reaching out to others and using the strengths that God has given us to use.

I need to remind you again that everything this church does is about is reaching and touching lost and unchurched people. We are trying to answer the call and command of Jesus Christ to go into the world and preach the gospel. We are trying to teach and make

disciples and train people to be Christ followers.

There are three things that we learn from Elisha's story that teach us the secret to answering God's call. Let's look at them together.

God will enable you with power to accomplish the ministry He calls you to do.

Elisha experienced the power of God by going back to the Jordan River and evoking God's power to enable him to cross over.

Elisha has just lost his friend and mentor. He has had a long day. A day that seemed to be building toward this unbelievable and dramatic moment when Elijah would be taken from him.

Elijah is now gone. He is standing alone. He is on the other side of the Jordan River from where he needs to be. He got there by Elijah using his cloak to part the waters. Now he stands there with Elijah's cloak in his hand and faces the river. It is at this point that he asks a very important question.

"Then he took the cloak that had fallen from him and struck the water with it. "Where now is the Lord God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over."

In this series we have concluded that if you are a Christ-follower you have been called to be engaged in a ministry to others.

During this series of messages you have been asked to begin to pray about and identify what you could best do to serve others.

You and I must realize that God is calling us.

We must realize what He is calling us to do.

We must realize that no matter how challenging it is He will be faithful to enable us to do it.

For Elisha to ask the question meant that he was asking, where is the God that answers by fire.

Where is the God that stops the rain?

Where is the God that fed Elijah using ravens to bring him food?

Where is the God that caused a widow's meager supplies to run over in abundance?

Where is the God that caused a dead boy to return to life?

Where is the God that caused angels to feed Elijah when he was worn out and in the middle of the desert?

Where is the God of Elijah that showed up after the rain and the storm and the high winds and the earthquake and the fire? He showed up like a gentle whisper or a still small voice.

If we approach our calling with that attitude there will be no limit to what God can do through us.

The songwriter had it right when she penned the words:

In the harvest field now ripened
There's a work for all to do;
Hark! the voice of God is calling
To the harvest calling you.

Does the place you're called to labor
Seem too small and little known?
It is great if God is in it,
And He'll not forget His own.

Little is much when God is in it!
Labor not for wealth or fame.
There's a crown—and you can win it,
If you go in Jesus' Name.

God promises to enable us to do the work He calls us to do.

God will empower you with the presence of His Holy Spirit.

Elisha asked Elijah for a double portion of his spirit. Today we have been promised to be filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit. (Purifying, Powerful.) We can only do ministry through the power of His Spirit. This is why the disciples were told to wait until they were endued or filled with power from on high in the book of Acts.

Jesus was very clear in his instruction to the apostles. Don't try to do ministry without the help of My Spirit.

People make major messes when they attempt to do things for God and yet at the same time are not surrendered to His spirit.

Acts 1:4, *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 1:8, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 4:33, *“With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and much grace was upon them all.”*

Romans 1:16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”*

Paul in writing to the church at Ephesus expressed it so well,

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparable great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him for the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

What is it that God is asking you to do?

Every Christ follower is commanded by God to do something. This church will be incredibly healthy when we have the whole body functioning.

This goes back to what I shared in the first message in this series. We do not want to become just some church with a great worship experience on Sunday morning although we strive to have that.

We must become a church that becomes the body of Christ. A living functioning body. Where no part is paralyzed. Where we become skilled and proficient in the work of God on this earth.

Maybe some of you remember an analogy that I have used many times before. Christ is the head of the church and we are his body. It's like the deal you find at many tourist attractions where you stick your head through a little hole and someone takes your picture with some kind of funny body painted on a board below you head. Think about it in reverse for a moment. The head is perfect because the Head is Jesus Christ. The body below is what I am concerned about.

In fact let me make it a little more personal. We are His body. Now the questions become are we healthy, are we functioning? Are we fulfilling what is important in God's eyes? Are we on crutches or in a wheelchair? Are we doing the work of the ministry that God calls His followers to do?

Video: Operation Gear Up

We are placing a major emphasis as a church on connecting to our neighbors around our three locations.

We can do it. We can do it individually and as a church when we submit our lives to the

power provided through God's Holy Spirit.

An old prophet a long time ago quoted God when he wrote, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty." (Zechariah 4:6)

When you find the ministry that God has for you don't do it on your own but surrender yourself to Him and he will take your weakness and give you unbelievable abilities and strength to carry out his will.

A.W. Tozer wrote many years ago: "Without the Holy Spirit 95% of what the early church did in ministry would have ceased but today 95% of what we do in ministry would continue without the Holy Spirit." (Paraphrase)

There is no question that God is calling you and there is no question that you can do what he is asking you to do if you yield yourself to His Spirit.

God gives us the ability to endure successes and failures because you have been given a purpose to accomplish.

Just because we have been called does not mean we will always succeed. Sometimes we will attempt things and fail.

People can cause this i.e. Elisha listening to the other prophets in verses 15-18. There will always be voices from people who are not being led by the spirit who will want you to distract you from your calling. Sometimes these people will try to rock your boat. It reminds me of a couple of quotes I read sometime ago. "The loudest boos always come from the cheap seats. And people who are busy rowing seldom have time to rock the boat." It will always be the uninvolved that Satan will use to try and distract you from what God wants you to do. These prophets were spectators. All they did in this story was watch. When they did try to get involved it was to control this young prophet. It was an exercise in futility. Don't let people distract you from what God is calling us to do and be as a church.

God will give us the ability to endure the burdens and the blessings.

There is a story of Elisha feeding 100 people instead of killing 100 found in Chapter 4:42-44. You remember Elijah's act of killing 100 people. In Chapter four of II Kings we find Elisha allowing God to use him to feed 100 people.

The apostle Paul had a self-revealing moment in II Corinthians 12:7-10. He puts it all in perspective. *"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given to me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Arthur Stace was a loser, a no-hoper, an alcoholic and completely illiterate. He lived in the streets of Sydney, regarded by many who saw him as a lost cause.

One Sunday night in 1932 he entered St Barnabas' Anglican Church on Broadway, Sydney, and heard the Reverend T. C. Hammond preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Arthur was convicted by the Spirit of God. He left the church, crossed the road, and sat under a tree in Victoria Park where he committed his life to Jesus Christ. He had become a new creation.

Later that year he was at the Burton Street Baptist Tabernacle on the corner of Palmer Street, Darlinghurst when he heard the evangelist John G Ridley preaching.

In his urgent, commanding voice, John Ridley cried, "Eternity! Eternity! Oh, that this word could be emblazoned across the streets of Sydney!"

Arthur Stace the little man who still could not read or write left that church, took some yellow chalk, bent down and wrote one word on the footpath. And throughout the night for the next 40 years, while Sydney slept, Arthur would take his chalk and write in immaculate copperplate handwriting the word "eternity" on sidewalks, entrances to the train station, and anywhere else he thought it would catch people's attention.

The people of Sydney would emerge from their commuter trains in the morning and see this word as they walked to work.

Heaven only knows how God will continue to speak to the hearts of so many people around the globe, using the work He started back in the 1930s through Arthur Stace and his piece of yellow chalk.

You will never find peace with anything less than eternity. This searching, deep in our souls, is a hunger that food can never feed, clothing can never cover, and shelter will never warm. At times it becomes a ravenous longing that demands satisfaction beyond our accomplishments and accumulations. Billionaires around the globe are miserable because in them this longing goes unfulfilled, while certain single parents with hungry children in mud huts are overflowing with joy because they have found this eternity.

The widest thing in the universe is not space; it is the potential capacity of the human heart. Being made in the image of God, it is capable of almost unlimited extension in all directions. And one of the world's greatest tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little besides ourselves.

What is God calling you to do? What is it that is eternal that you are engaged in for God? Are you hungry to do something with your life that matters?