Faith During Faithlessness - Part 2

Faith That Works

## (2 Kings 3.15-20)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We’re in part 2 of a message series entitled “Faith During Faithfulness,” and it’s my prayer that God would minister to you in a special way, that he would not only build your faith, but that he would increase your capacity for the supernatural. And last week we began with a message “Digging Ditches” following a prophet named Elisha who was the successor to the renowned prophet Elijah. Now, some might say that is a tough act to follow, but Elisha had a crazy bold kind of faith, he possessed according to his own request, a double portion of Elijah’s spirit.

According to Scriptures, Elisha accepted the call of God about 4 years before the death of Ahab, King of Israel. He became the student and attendant of Elijah until that day when he (Elijah) was taken up into heaven. The Bible tells us that,

“They were walking along and talking together, when 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” (2 Kings 2:11).

Quickly rebounding from Elijah’s departure, Elisha went back, stood on the bank of the Jordan, and calling upon the Lord, the God of Elijah,

“He struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over” (2 Kings 2:14).

Returning to Jericho, the power of God was upon him, and he healed a contaminated spring of water that was making people sick. And then next we find him at Bethel where some young boys were making fun of him because evidently, he didn’t have a lot of hair, and so these boys were calling him “Baldy.” Well, apparently, they continue pressing him and pushing, maybe even physically abusing him, until things got out of hand, and the Bible says,

“He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths” (2 Kings 2:24).

And so, God responded sternly with judgment because of the dishonor shown to his prophet, because it was just as if it had been done to God himself.

Next, we find Elisha telling the army of Joram, King of Israel, to dig ditches in a dry valley and we’re going to look at that again today. We’re going to pick up where we left off last week, because many of us struggle through life because our faith is small and we’re not willing to dream big. And so, last week we began reading about these three kings who find themselves in a desperate place, they are following a dry riverbed looking for water but found none. I believe for many of you today, that God is going to expand your faith to think big, but you’re going to have to be willing to start small.

In second Kings, chapter three, we find Joram, the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, and Mesha, the king of Edom, joining forces to go to battle against the Moabites. This confederation of armies has now arrived at the valley at the southern end of the Dead Sea, morale was high because they believed they were going to win easily, but suddenly they discover that they had marched themselves right into a predicament. They were out of water, hadn’t seen any water, there wasn’t even a cloud in the sky, and now the soldiers and the animals were thirsty.

Joram, the king of Israel, forgetting that his father’s God, Baal, was the rain God, becomes discouraged and upset and blames the Lord for their predicament. He’s frustrated and he shouts,

"What! Has the Lord called us three kings together only to hand us over to Moab?" (2 Kings 3:10).

And he blames God, but Jehoshaphat instinctively stands up for the Lord God. He says, “Well, has anybody asked him?” And he suggested seeking a man of God, a prophet of the Lord, so that they may inquire of the Lord through him. The other 2 Kings agreed, and so they humbled themselves, and they went to ask for Elisha’s help.

Now, Elisha almost refused because of the idolatrous Joram, but because Jehoshaphat had the favor of God, Elisha revealed God’s plan. He had them bring a musician so that he could begin worshiping, as the psalmist said in chapter 100, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise” (Psalm 100:4). And so, while the harpist was playing, bringing Elisha into the presence of the Lord,

“The hand of the Lord came upon Elisha and he said, "This is what the Lord says: Make this valley full of ditches” (2 Kings 3:15-16).

I want to talk to you today about “Faith That Works” because what I’ve learned in life, when it comes to faith, spirituality, or theology, is that I don’t deserve anything. Absolutely nothing, and yet many growing up in this generation today have a mindset of entitlement. And so, we grow up not being prepared for the challenges of life because we’ve been lied to all of our lives. And the way that we think is merely a reflection of our culture and we’ve become a generation that likes to talk like kings and yet we aren’t willing to dig like servants.

I believe the reason why so many of us become easily overwhelmed by our circumstances is because we think like followers, like slaves, and not like leaders, princes, or kings. We grow up thinking that everybody is going to take care of us, provide for us, giving us whatever we need, and we quickly find ourselves trapped in situations that we’ve actually been called to correct ourselves. And so, like the king of Israel, we give up before the fight ever breaks out, we throw up our hands in exasperation, and we let the conditions around us convince us that we can’t reach our goal because things are just beyond our control.

Today, I want to encourage you to think like a king, because what good is it if you have the anointing, but you still have the habits of a servant. And so, we’ve got to increase our capacity for what God wants to do in our lives because he says,

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God…” (1 Peter 2:9).

In other words, God calls us to be kings and priests, royalty, so that as leaders in this generation we can take on more responsibility. And so, you don’t have to seek the favor and the anointing of God. You have the favor and anointing of God, he’s anointed you, and he’s empowered you, not to be a servant but to be a king.

The problem is that when you grow up, having never thought like a king, when you haven’t prepared and planned ahead, you don’t have the foundation or infrastructure to go to the next level. And so, some of us have embraced the king’s lifestyle but we’re still relying upon a servant’s resources. And that’s what we see happening with these three kings, because God could send the rain, he could give them water, but sometimes he wants to see our faith. In other words, I’m talking about a faith that works, a faith that is effective, a faith that moves the heart of God, a faith that arouses a response from God. And so, I’m talking about a faith that is active, a faith that works, a faith that does something, because it believes that God is going to move on our behalf.

Elisha tells the three kings, “This is what the Lord says: Make this valley full of ditches.” Now, God didn’t need these soldiers to dig to get water because he can do anything, and so he didn’t need them to do that, but here’s what the Bible does say,

“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (James 2:26).

And so, when God said, “Make this valley full of ditches” it’s just as if he were saying,

“Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do” (James 2:18).

Because faith without deeds is dead, and so God loves to see our faith in action. In fact, all through the Bible you see it again and again. In Matthew chapter 9, “Some man brought to Jesus a paralytic, lying on a mat,” and verse 2 says,

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven" (Matthew 9:2).

And so, when Jesus saw their faith, but how do you see faith? Well, you see faith in action and so, “Jesus said to the paralytic, “Get up, take your mat and go home.” And the man got up and went home (Matthew 9:6-7).

In Luke chapter 5, some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat. They tried to get him into a house where Jesus was teaching, but they couldn’t get him in because of the crowd, and so the Bible says in verse 19,

“They went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith…”

When Jesus did what? “When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven” (Luke 5:19-20).

Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God” (Luke 5:24-25).

Again and again in the Bible we find Jesus wanting to see our faith, wanting us to do something, wanting us to participate in the miracle.

For example, in Mark chapter 3, he said to a man with a shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." And then he tells him,

"Stretch out your hand” (Mark 3:5).

In other words, Jesus was going to heal him, his intention was to heal him, but he wanted to see his faith to believe it and stretch out his hand.

Another time in John’s gospel, there was a man who had been an invalid for 38 years, and in John chapter 5 Jesus asked him, “Do you want to get well?” The man made some excuses, and so Jesus wanting to see if he had the faith to believe, said to him in verse 8,

“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked” (John 5:8-9).

You see, only God can send the water, but sometimes he wants you to dig a ditch.

Later in chapter 9, there was another guy who was blind from birth, Jesus goes up to him,

“He spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes. "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam," he told him. So, the man went and washed, and came home seeing” (John 9:6-7).

In other words, Jesus says, "I'm going to do my part, now I want to see you do yours. “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do” (James 2:18).

You see, God can send the water, but he wants to see your faith, because “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). And so, sometimes he wants to see you dig a ditch because there are too many people that are waiting for God to answer a prayer, but they’re not doing anything, they haven’t shown any faith.

Over the years, I’ve heard a lot of people say that they want to quit smoking and they’ve prayed about it, but they just can’t seem to quit. And I think sometimes God wants us to dig a ditch, you know like maybe just stop buying cigarettes. Maybe saying, “Jesus, here’s some faith,” and throwing those cigarettes in the trash when you walk out the door. “Here’s some faith, I’m done with that,” because what you’re doing is you’re digging a ditch.

I’ve heard people say, “I just want my kids to grow up to be strong Christians,” but they rarely bring them to church, and they don’t even open the Bible in their own home. The Lord said, “If you want some water,” what do you have to do? You’re going to have to dig a ditch, right? That’s why the Bible says to train up a child in the way that they should go (Proverbs 22:6). You’ve got to:

“Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

Talking about the Word of God when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6:7). Because what you’re doing is you’re digging a ditch.

And then, there are those that complain about their bills, complain that they don’t have enough money, but they don’t tithe to the church. And yet, God tells us that if we give him our first and our best that he will bless the rest. And so, it’s digging a ditch, and I know it doesn’t make any sense to the human mind, but for those of you who have tested God, you’ve found him to be faithful. Those of you who give 10%, know the supernatural power of God, because you’ve seen month after month how 90% with his blessing goes so much further than 100% without his blessing. It’s a ridiculous, crazy spiritual discipline, but it’s true, because you’re digging a ditch. That’s why God says,

“Test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).

You see, as you give, you’re demonstrating your faith, you’re digging a ditch, and you get to watch God work as he proves himself faithful.

The problem is that there are too many people who call themselves Christians who don’t think big enough. What I mean is that instead of thinking like kings, they think like servants, and yet the Bible says we serve a God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us (Ephesians 3:20). And so, we need to start thinking like kings, because we serve that kind of God, and he is the King of Kings and Lord of lords.

And then, because we don’t think big enough, many of us have a servant’s mentality, and we’re unwilling to start small. But the truth is that when you dig a ditch, it doesn’t matter whether it’s a big ditch or a little ditch, you start digging in the same way, just one shovel full of dirt at a time. And so, instead of worrying about what people are thinking, we just need to pick up that shovel and start digging.

In fact, in the year 537 BC, when the Jews started rebuilding the temple, they got out and began digging ditches for the foundation. Their neighbors were watching and began to mock and ridicule them saying,

"What is this you are doing?" (Nehemiah 2:19).

And for some of the Jews, those that were old enough to remember the original temple, they recognized that this project was just a small thing in comparison to Solomon’s Temple. But we must look at God’s work, God’s building, looking through his eyes and not the eyes of the people of the world, because he said,

"Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel” (Zechariah 4:10).

In the same way, we must recognize that “the day of small things” is God’s work, it’s his day, and it’s his power that is made perfect in weakness. It’s always been God, it was God who raised up Joseph from prison, it was God who brought David in from the pasture, it was God who released Daniel from slavery, and it was God who transformed the entire world with a few fishermen, a tax collector, and a tent maker.

Sometimes you’ve just got to start small, you may have a big vision, and you don’t know where to start. But I want to encourage you to start with what is in front of you, start small, just be faithful with what God has given you. And so, think big, think immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine, and be willing to start small, because God loves it when he can see our faith. Only God can send the water, but he wants you to participate in the miracle, he wants you to dig the ditches, because faith without works is dead.

There may be some of you right now who have a significant need and you may be thinking, “If God would only answer my prayer?” And I want to assure you that God hears your prayer, he has your miracle in his hand, but there are times when he wants you to pick up that shovel, believing long before there is even a cloud in the sky, that if you dig that ditch, he is faithful enough to send the water.

These three kings faithfully dug ditches, believing what the Lord had said in verse 17,

“You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. This is an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord…” (2 Kings 3:17-18).

In other words, you have no idea just how powerful, how strong, and how mighty our God is. He can make it rain with just a snap of his fingers, it’s an easy thing in the eyes of the Lord. And then he says, “Oh, and by the way,

“He will also hand Moab over to you. You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones” (2 Kings 3:18-19).

I am believing that this is a prophetic word for somebody who is trying to think like a king, because something is beginning to shift in the spiritual realm, but you’re going to have to begin thinking differently. And it may not be easy, but you’ve got to begin thinking like a king, it might stretch you, because people may mock you and ridicule you, they may not always agree with you, they may have different belief systems, but God is going to use them to help you dig and bring you to the next level in your life.

And so, something is getting ready to shift in this room, something is getting ready to change in your story, things are getting ready to shift in your life, but we’ve got to keep digging, making ditches in the valley. Because we’re laying the foundation for something new, “forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead…” (Philippians 3:13). Yes, you may have been in a dry place, you’ve been in a desert place, you’ve been in a lonely place, but God is getting ready to give you a word that is going to snatch you out.

"This is what the Lord says: Make this valley full of ditches” (2 Kings 3:16).

As we come to a close, I know you’re tired, you’re thirsty, you’ve been afraid, but this dry desert valley is not the end, it’s just the beginning of what God wants to do in your life. And that’s why God said in first Peter,

“After you have suffered a little while, (God himself will) restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 Peter 5:10).

And when God gets through with what you’re digging, you’re going to find that your life, your business, your ministry, and your calling is just beginning. Because the anointing, the waters are just beginning to flow, and what God has for you is so much bigger than the ditch that you have dug. But there won’t be any wind, there won’t be any rain, there won’t be any sign at all, and suddenly out of nowhere the waters will spring up so fast that you won’t even have time to get ready.

“The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, there it was — water flowing from the direction of Edom! And the land was filled with water” (2 Kings 3:20).

There it was, water flowing, but until then God expects you to keep digging. And so, when you get back home, back to your job, back to the kids, back to your place, you’re going to have to keep digging. Just keep digging because you’re going to hit something and the water that is going to come up in your life is not just going to bless you, it’s going to bless those who are coming after you. It’s for those with you, for your cattle, and your other animals. It’s for your children and your children’s children. And the Holy Spirit said, just keep digging, because if you’ll dig a ditch God will send the water.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

December 12, 2021

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*