**“When Iron Floats” (Sermon)**

**Sermon (FCC)**

**July 8, 2018**

**Greetings**

**“Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint.”**[[1]](#footnote-1)

**It is again a privilege** to be able to come before you for a second consecutive Sunday, bringing the message in the absence of our Senior Pastor Jonathan Hall. **As always** thank you to my family and friends who have come in support. **Thanks above all to** God our creator.

**Introduction**

**One of the many classes I** was required to take in seminary was a study on preparing for and preaching sermons. **During the course** of the quarter in which I took the class, I and each of my classmates were given scripture out of “1 and 2 Kings” and told to give an interpretation, writing a short sermon we would present to our classmates for critique. **So I thought on this** morning, it would be neat and a bit fun to share this particular sermon that I wrote.

**In our faith tradition** we tend to focus more on the New Testament for foundational material in which to share in our sermons. **Certainly we all** know much of what is in the Hebrew scripture and also on occasion make the stories central to the message.

**Today I want to present** an angle on the accounting in 2 Kings 6, where as was read, the prophet Elisha makes an axhead float. **As a bit of a refresher,** Elisha was first the student of the Prophet Elijah, who while walking with Elisha, was as described in 2 Kings 2, as being taken up to heaven by horses in chariots of fire. **After which the other** prophets who had witnessed this, inform Elisha, that Elijah’s spirit now rested upon him. **I share this to paint** the picture for you, that before as we saw in 2 Kings 6, Elisha being able to float an iron axhead, was no fluke or piece of luck, such as winning the lottery. **Elisha already knew** he had the power to do what was seemingly not normal to those who were watching. **Yet it was the most normal** thing Elisha could have done, even if it appeared to be supernatural.

**So if you will indulge me** for a few moments, I’ll share an interpretation of what I believe it takes to make “iron float.”

**Prophet’s Solution**

2 Kings 6:1-7

**What Happened**

**Have you ever been carrying a valuable tool in your hands** such as a hammer or screwdriver and dropped it on the ground? **I know that I have** and without much thought leaned over and picked my tool up out of the dirt and continued on my way.

**How about swam in a pool or at the beach** and had a ring or bracelet slip from your finger or wrist into the somewhat calm waters? **If so, with little** more effort than picking up a tool from the ground and perhaps with some help from friends, you were able to reach or swim to the bottom and retrieve the jewelry.

**Then maybe there was a time when you** might have been standing on a bridge looking into the deep waters of a river far below and felt the uncomfortable feeling of the moment in which your glasses slipped from the skin of perhaps your hot and sweaty face, disappearing into those deep waters.

**Do you remember the terror** in the realization that not only had you lost something valuable, but also you were no longer in possession of a tool needed to do work on your behalf? **It’s not in the dirt,** so you can’t pick it up like the hammer and it’s not the bracelet resting next to your foot in the shallow waters of a swimming pool. No you can’t see your glasses and you can’t get to them. **In all likelihood** the river’s current have begun to carry your tool for being able to see, farther and farther away from where you were standing.

**In 2 Kings 6 we find out that Elisha has accompanied** a company of prophets to the river Jordan and that these prophets had begun to cut down some trees in order for there to be a place that they could meet. **As one of the prophets** was in the act of cutting down a tree, the axhead came loose from its handle and fell into the water.

**I don’t know, but maybe it was** an old handle and perhaps its wooden end had become splintered, and could no longer serve as a secure attachment point for the axhead. **A little moisture might** have seeped into the point of attachment and maybe that moisture just happened to have come from the sweat of the prophet’s brow, through his act of hard work and the axhead just loosened enough, for it to detach and fall into the Jordan. **I’m just imagining** that this could be the case.

**To further complicate matters we are told** that the axhead was borrowed. **I don’t know about** you but when someone borrows something from me I expect him or her to return it. **On top of everything** else it is probably fair to assume that the iron axhead was valuable and not easy to find and replace. **There was not** a “Jordan River Iron Manufacturing Company” where the prophet could make a quick trip on a mule to pick up a replacement axhead. **The prophet was** in quite a predicament and Elisha seeing this asked, “where did it fall?”

**What it takes to float an axhead**

**The Jordan is a river with many twists and turns,** running some 156 miles from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, so it is fair to assume, its waters are not shallow and always calm. **Therefore it was probably** one of those rough water days, because the prophet who was swinging the axe didn’t say, “excuse me for a moment as I wade into the water and retrieve the axhead.”

**And even Elisha**, the one who had witnessed Elijah being taken up, didn’t say, “I’ll be back in a couple of minutes.” **Maybe Elisha had** only one set of clothes with him, and if he had gotten them wet in the river Jordan, there might not have been enough sun left in the day for his clothes to completely dry out.

**So Elisha still knowing he could be of service,** looked to the power he knew he had and obviously a power that the prophet who cried out: “Oh no, my lord, it was borrowed!” didn’t know existed. **How many times have** you and I cried out, over a lost axhead? **We have axheads** that are not necessarily tools, but have never the less fallen into deep, swift and sometimes terrifying waters.

**Maybe it was that job** we thought was so secure. **A friend** we never imagined we would have to part ways with. **Children we have cried** over, who have gone in destructive directions. **Some might have been in** the grips of alcohol and or drug abuse. **Perhaps it was an** unhealthy or dangerous relationship. **Or maybe we have** found ourselves hungry and homeless. **Many times we might** have found ourselves without our axhead. **So how do we have** it returned to, or floated for us?

**It is not a natural** phenomenon for iron to float. **Now I understand through** the process of displacement that iron can be made to float but, in order for an axhead to be effective as a tool, displacement is not a quality available to the axhead. **So a power, which** exists outside of the natural or physical realm, must be brought into play in order to do what on first glance, is not natural.

**Elisha without hesitation knew this and after asking** where did the axhead fall, he cut a stick, and scripture in simple language states: he “threw it there.” **I don’t think Elisha** was showing off. **There were no** fireworks. **The earth did not** tremble. **Birds were not** singing harmonious praises. **Yet it is obvious** that Elisha knew the power he possessed. **Scripture is brief** in telling us simply that after Elisha threw the stick there, iron was floated.

**So I ask, do you** know what your stick is?That which is capable of making your seemingly lost iron axhead float? **Maybe you need** to float the iron out of a painful relationship. **Maybe you need to float** the iron of release from the river of addiction. **Maybe you need to float the iron** out of how uncomfortable you are currently feeling as you witness all of the turmoil that is taking place around us. **Maybe you need to float** the iron out of the guilt for something you may have done in the past. **Maybe you need to float the iron—**well I bet you alone know what iron it is you need to float.

**You have been patiently waiting long enough,** so I’m going to divulge to you a possibility perhaps, of where the stick is found which is capable of floating, your iron axhead. **You might have** already guessed, it’s prayer! **I am a product** and witness to prayer being the stick, capable of floating an axhead.

**For one, I** was told that when the axhead of freedom fell into the waters of bondage, an ancestor prayed that I would live in freedom. **I’m pretty sure I heard** my mother pray on December 10th 1961, the day before I was born, that the axhead of opportunity not available to her and my father, would be floated for me. **I pray everyday that** iron be floated out of the waters of anxiety that comes with having to live with a chronic health condition. **Prayer has floated the axhead of** family and friends out of an ocean of what might otherwise have been sadness and loneliness. **I can’t speak for you** but, I cast a stick for the axhead of love and peace, to be floated. **I** **could go on** and on, but you alone know for what you need to cast your stick and float some iron.

**Some here this morning might** believe that I am speaking of a God who preforms magic tricks or answers some prayers and not others. **Perhaps a God that rewards us** with nice things if we would just pray and pray the “right” way. **However, if you allow today’s message** to sit with you for a while this week and even beyond, what you will begin to realize is that today’s message was about how prayer actually works on us. **Ultimately; enabling every** individual to have a deep and personal relationship with God, the Creator, the Divine, or any name we may or may not have, for that which described itself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 as; “I Am.”

**Closing**

**We can reason that our savior floated** for us the axhead of salvation, because Jesus is said to have prayed so earnestly that his sweat was like drops of blood.[[2]](#footnote-2) **Even today, the Apostle Paul’s teachings,** instructs us to “pray without ceasing.”[[3]](#footnote-3) **Still frequently,** we take for granted the power of prayer that is promised to us.

**We become paralyzed** by what seems impossible because we wont take the time to do the most connected thing God asks us to do. **Simply for just** a few moments, to stop and pray. **Jesus modeled for** us the power of prayer and was speaking directly to us, when he to told his disciples on the Mount of Olives; to “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Elisha had confidence in and knew what to do** in the seemingly unnatural task of floating an axhead. **So without hesitation** he cut a stick and threw it there. **Will you throw a stick** and make your iron axheads float?

1. Isaiah 40:31 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Luke 22:44 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Luke 22:40 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)