

2 Kings 6:15-17
Easter 6; May 1 & 2, 2016

We have all seen and experience rivalries in life. We like rivalries with sports teams. There are some of you who are Packers fans; others are Viking fans; others Bears fans; even others who are Lions fans. For most of us, those rivalries are fun. They are just another way that we might enjoy football.

There are rivalries among siblings. One sibling might feel as if they are favored more than another. How many of us have either spoken or heard the words: *"It's not fair..."* Yet, there are times that sibling rivalries turn deadly as they did with Cain and Abel; Joseph and his brothers; Jacob and Esau, and the list could go on.

Rivalries can also be between nations. The words of our text are spoken at a time when there was a rivalry between the nation of Israel and the nation of Aram. This fighting between these two nations had been going on for years. It wasn't limited to just the two kings who were going at it when the words of our text were written. This had been going on for multiple Kings on each side. The prophet Elijah had been in the middle of this rivalry for years. Elijah's work was now coming to an end. It was now time to *pass the torch* to someone else. That someone was Elisha.

Elisha was a farmer plowing in the field when Elijah approached him and designated Elisha as his successor. After he said goodbye to his family, **"He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant."** (1 Kings 19:21) For the next seven or eight years, Elisha walked with Elijah. He learned from Elijah. He watched God perform mighty deeds through Elijah.

Then the time came for Elijah to go to heaven. What a sight Elisha saw. **"As 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."** (2 Kings 2:11) As God had been with Elijah, He was now with Elisha as well. Shortly after Elijah had been taken to heaven, Elisha would purify the bad water of Jericho. 42 youths were mauled to death by two bears because they had mocked God's prophet. A woman's son from the city of Shumen was restored to life after he had died. Naaman was healed of leprosy. Elisha and God were not a force to be against.

Yet, the King of Aram continued to send these raiding parties into Israel. Through the prophet Elisha, God would reveal the location to the King of Israel as to where they would attack next. The King of Aram was getting frustrated. The only conclusion that they could draw was that there was a traitor among one of his officials. Right before the words of our text, one of the officials tell the King of Aram: **"None of us, my lord the king," said one of his officers, "but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom."**

The King of Aram was going to take matters into his own hands again. He had enough. The plan was simple. **"Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city."** The city of Dothan is surrounded during the night. Elisha's servant comes looks out from where they were staying, and sees the city surrounded. Fear chills down his back. His question to Elisha is clear and simple: **"Oh, my lord, what shall we do?"**

What would be your reaction if you saw the same thing? I think, I would be terrified. The odds don't look real good right now for Elisha. The deck is stacked against him. There seems to be no way out. Right? Wrong! With confidence, Elisha says: **"Don't be afraid.... Those who are with us, are more than those who are with them."** I imagine that servant said to Elisha: *"Are you blind? Don't you see all these soldiers? We are only 2 people. How can you say: 'Those who are with us, are more than those who are with them.' It doesn't look that way to me?"*

Elisha offers a simple prayer: **"O Lord, open his eyes so he may see."** Wow! Suddenly all fear went away. He understood those words of Elisha: **"Those who are with us, are more than those who are with them."** What did they see? **"The hills full of horses and chariot of fire all around Elisha."** God had sent the Cavalry of angels. All fears were gone with God. His panic was overcome with a sense of peace. Everything changed for him when he saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire.

God also says to us: ***“Open your eyes and see that those who are with us, are more than those who are with them.”*** With God, this is always going to be true. God outnumbers all the fears that we face. With God, there is more forgiveness than the sins we commit. Stress may be piled high, but God easily lifts it away. Elisha was God’s prophet. Nothing was going to change that. You are God’s child. You were made that through the waters of baptism. No one can snatch you out of the Lord’s hands. As you come and receive his body and blood in the Lord’s supper, you are filled with all kinds of spiritual blessings.

God outnumbers any fears, so you and I can sleep soundly and wake up ready to face a new day because God is there. Fears have a way of crippling us. Worry sucks all the joy out of life. We worry about things that never happen. I’m just as guilty as doing all of that myself. I need to hear those words of Elisha. You need to hear those words of Elisha. **“Those who are with us, are more than those who are with them.”** There is comfort and strength in those words. Those words speak to troubled hearts. Those words take away spiritual apathy. Loving Jesus means gladly following his teachings.

This world will always have its rivalries. With Jesus, all rivalries against Satan are gone. With Jesus, our fears are gone. For with Jesus, **“Those who are with us, are more than those who are with them.”** Amen.