

## Surely the LORD Lives!

Our God is a God of minutia. He is the sort of God that doesn't just know about the big, huge topics. No, he also knows perfectly every little detail. We have a great reminder of that fact during the week before Jesus was crucified. Jesus is in the temple courts and the Sadducees want to trap Jesus. And so, they tell Jesus: *"Matt. 22:24 'Teacher,' they said, 'Moses told us that if a man dies without having children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him. 25 Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. 26 The same thing happened to the second and third brother, right on down to the seventh. 27 Finally, the woman died. 28 Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be of the seven, since all of them were married to her?'"*

You see, the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection from the dead. And so Jesus tells them: *"31 But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."*

These religious rulers should have known that it was stupid to deny the fact that believers will rise from the dead. Why was it so foolish? Because the details speak against them. The LORD does not call himself the God of the guy who used to be Abraham (but isn't anymore). He calls him the God of the Living—not the God of the lifeless, useless dead. It's the details that proved that the LORD lives on that week. And this morning, it's the details that prove to us that Surely, the LORD Lives!

As we begin these words we see the context very clearly and quickly. This day was the day that Elijah would die. It was the day that Elijah would leave his friend Elisha behind. And, it's important for us to understand this fact. Because the LORD lives, his Saints leave. This is the LORD's plan. This is the pattern we see all around us. We grow attached to our fellow Christians. But, when the LORD chooses, they leave us.

It was this fact that caused Elisha so much pressure and pain. Elisha could not say 'goodbye.' He just couldn't do it. Elijah told Elisha to turn and stay behind. But Elisha speaks an oath. He says: *"As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you."*

Now, this is one of these examples where, in the original language it's a little more emphatic. Really what Elisha is saying here is: "as surely as I have live and as surely as the LORD lives, may God deal with me—be it ever so severely, if I leave you."

Elisha spoke this oath three times. It was that hard for Elisha to say 'goodbye.' The prophets reminded him of what he already knew—that today was the day. Elijah gently told him to stay behind. And he just can't let go. Finally, the LORD sends a chariot of fire. And this chariot forces its way in between them both.

And here is where we see the details condemning Elisha, just like they did the Sadducees when Jesus was at the temple. He said those words: "as surely as I have live and as surely as the LORD lives, may God deal with me—be it ever so severely, if I leave you." But he really didn't understand what he was saying, did he? Because the LORD lives, Elisha should have been able to say 'goodbye.' He should have been able to let go, because he was letting Elijah go into careful, caring, living hands that would take care of him. But Elisha could not.

Surely, the LORD lives! And because he lives, his Saints leave us. Elisha could not deal with this fact. And, should it surprise us that we can't either? If God hasn't already, he will call your loved one home. He will call your parent, your brother or even your child home to him. And you will have to say 'goodbye.' But, in our selfishness, we cling to that person so tightly. And the horrible sin in that is that, if we cling to that person too tightly, we will end up letting go of Jesus. That is how powerful and selfish our sinful nature is.

Surely, the LORD lives! And his saints leave us. That fact causes us so much pressure and pain, just as it did to Elisha. But, in these words we also find hope and strength. Because not only do his saints leave us. But they live forever with Jesus in heaven.

Elijah left Elisha. The living LORD took him. And what got to him—that pain that was stabbing him was not the question of whether Elijah was in heaven or not. It was the fact that he was no longer with him any more. Elisha couldn't laugh with him. He couldn't be angry with him. He couldn't be sad or rejoicing with Elijah. Because he was with the LORD and not with him.

The LORD saw Elisha's pain. And he covered his sin. In the gospel for this Sunday, we see this being fulfilled for us. Surely the LORD lives! And because he lives, his saints live too. And even more than that, we will live with them forever in heaven. We will see our grandparents, our friends, our children who have died in the faith.

But, how do we know? How do we know that we will be with them. We find the answer to that question on this mountain. We will be with Elijah and Elisha in heaven because Jesus chose to be without. Jesus didn't just climb up this mountain and reveal his glory. He also went down the mountain. And then, on a different mountain—a hill named after a skull, he went without. He went without. He went without the support of his Father or Elijah in heaven. He went without the support of his family and disciples below. He was alone so that we would never be alone.

We know that we will be with the Christians who have gone before us because Jesus was alone. But, we also know this because Jesus also rose from the dead. He rose. He left the tomb behind. He lives *for* us. And he promises that one day soon he will live *with* us.

So then, my brothers and sisters, remember this fact: Surely the LORD Lives! When you know that the LORD is going to call your loved one home to himself, don't find your strength in the memories you have of that saint—whether good or bad. Find your strength in the same way Elisha did. Your Savior lives. Since he lives, that saint who died now lives with him. And, in his own way and in his own perfect power, he will calm you and comfort you until he brings you safely to himself. Amen.