

"Elisha and the Shunammite Woman"

2 Kings 4:8-37

Introduction: Last week in our study of Elisha's life we looked at how he received no recognition for the miracle which he was connected to in 2 Kings 3. The three kings seemed to have forgotten him after their victory over the Moabites. But God did not forget him for here in this chapter we see yet another opportunity for Elisha to minister into the lives of those in need. This account will begin by introducing us to a certain woman.

Notice 2 Kings 4:8

There is one word here that the Holy Spirit uses to describe this woman and it is the word "GREAT". One of the meanings of this word is "distinguished". She was a great woman. That is not a word that is used very often about human individuals in the Bible. We read about our great God, and about the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and even about some great angel or another, and we read of great actions and great events. But here was a great woman.

There are not many people who can wear the title of "GREAT". Many however have desired to be great. Charles Spurgeon said, "***Many through wishing to be great have failed to be good.***"

In the book of Jeremiah, we read these words;

Jeremiah 45:5a

⁵ And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not:

There is within sinful man the desire to be great and this is a desire we must fight against as we live in this world. We must remember that as believers people are not to be focused upon you and me, but we are to point them to Jesus Christ, the True Great One.

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Philippians 1:20-21

²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

God is GREAT and therefore it is God who is to be magnified and glorified. I understand that all of us desire to be used in a way that honors God but seeking to be great in the eyes of those around us, is walking after the flesh and not the Spirit. Greatness in the eyes of God is not greatness in the eyes of the world. Let me show you what Jesus taught His disciples.

Mark 9:33-34

³³ *And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?*

³⁴ *But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.*

Matthew 18:1-4

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

² *And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,*

³ *And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

Matthew 23:11-12

¹¹ *But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.*

¹² *And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

Greatness in the eyes of God is a person who takes upon them the spirit of a servant.

Now getting back to our text today we shall see the secrets of true greatness in the life of the Shunammite woman.

I. **Great People Show Great Kindness**

Notice 2 Kings 4:8

Elisha traveled by this lady's house frequently and as he did she "constrained" him to eat some food that she had to offer. This then became a frequent rest stop for Elisha in his travels. The word "constrained" tells us a great deal about Elisha. The word means that she

had to really press him to eat the food she had. This tells me that Elisha was not a man who was looking to benefit from the compassion of others. He was willing to let God meet his needs and as time went on Elisha must have realized that one of the ways in which God would provide was through the hospitality of this woman and her husband.

Notice 2 Kings 4:9

This is a very interesting verse. This verse tells me that she did not know who Elisha was nor did she know that he was a prophet of God when she first extended kindness to him. Her actions recall a couple of verses that Paul penned to the Galatians.

Galatians 6:9-10

⁹ *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

¹⁰ *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Then there are the words of Hebrews.

Hebrews 13:1-3

Let brotherly love continue.

² **Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:** *for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

³ *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

Notice the Words of Jesus in Mark.

Mark 9:41

⁴¹ *For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.*

Notice 2 Kings 4:10

As the woman became more acquainted with Elisha she suggested to her husband that they should build a walled room for Elisha to stay in when he passed by. Now let us understand that the prophets were not wealthy people. They were supported by the jobs they worked and by the people of the land but in Elisha's day they were not well liked by many, so the support would have been minimal. This lady and her husband had been blessed by God and it was the lady's desire to invest it into eternity.

Because Elisha traveled by the house of the Shunammite and her husband she saw him as an opportunity to show great kindness.

Application:

There are many opportunities that pass by our lives also, but the question is, "What do we do with them?" Let me show you the words Paul wrote to Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

¹⁷ Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy:

¹⁸ That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate:

¹⁹ Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Most of us are all rich in the sense that at times we can invest some of what we have in the lives of others. The problem often is that we are fearful to give what we have away because we do not know what next week may hold. We forget the words of Proverbs 19.

Proverbs 19:17

¹⁷ He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Getting back to the thought, one of the marks of greatness is being willing to show kindness to others and especially those who are in need.

II. **Great People Receive Great Blessings**

Notice 2 Kings 4:11-13

Here we see the heart of the Shunammite woman. Elisha desired to return to her a blessing for all she had done. When asked if she would like to be spoken of to the king or to the captain of the host she declined. She had not extended kindness to Elisha with the motive of self-promotion. She was not interested with rubbing shoulders with what the world would call the elite. She was content to live a humble life among her people.

Application:

When we show kindness to people it should never be for the purpose of personal gain. If it is only for the reason of personal gain, then it will not be accepted by God. As we have

considered many times, we are not to give to get. We should give out of cheerful hearts with a desire to honor our Lord.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

⁶ *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*

⁷ *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

⁸ *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

Notice 2 Kings 4:14-17

What a blessing for the Shunammite woman! She had been barren and through God's power she became pregnant and gave birth to a son.

Application:

There are many applications for our lives but there is one that God brought to front of my mind as I prepared this study. This woman had been barren up until this time. We could say that she had not brought forth any fruit until she showed kindness to Elisha.

There are many believers today who bear little fruit for God. It is the Lord's desire that we bear much fruit.

John 15:1-8

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

² *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

³ *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

⁴ *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

⁵ *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

⁶ *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

⁷ *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

⁸ *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

The Shunammite woman bear no fruit until she gave what she had to the Lord. In the same way God wants us to give what we have to Him even to the point of giving ourselves.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

We are to present ourselves a living sacrifice unto God. Now, one thing we must understand is that in order to bear the fruit that God desires us to bear we are going to have to die to self. In other words, we must be willing to give up a life lived to please the desires of the flesh.

John 12:24-26

²⁴ *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

²⁵ *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

²⁶ *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

In verse 24 Jesus is speaking of His own death and burial but there is an application for us also. Until we are willing to die to self there will very little if any fruit.

The Shunammite woman was willing to give whatever she had, and the result was FRUIT (fruit of the womb in her case). When we are willing to give all, we have to God then there will be much fruit within our lives for we will then be controlled by the Holy Spirit and not by the flesh.

Galatians 5:22-25

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*

²³ *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

²⁴ *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.*

²⁵ *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Conclusion:

We will continue in this miracle the next time. As we close I will leave you with a challenge to give of yourself to the Lord from what Paul wrote to the Corinthians.

2 Corinthians 9:10-12

¹⁰ Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

¹¹ Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

¹² For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

He Corinthians may have been hesitant to give to the need that was at Jerusalem, but Paul made it clear that God gives seed to sow and He multiplies the seed that is sown. The point he was making was they could not out give God. The giving of the saints at Corinth brought glory to God and our giving to the needs of others or just giving of ourselves also brings glory to our God.

How much of yourself have you given to the Lord? Is there a part you are holding back?