

Beloved in the Lord,

We head back into the time before the siege of Samaria. This story causes some to scratch their heads a little bit because it seems out of place. Earlier in the narrative we read about Gehazi's fall from grace and subsequent 随后 contraction of leprosy and dismissal 解雇 as Elisha's servants. Ours in a sermon is not to give to you all the thinking about what is going here, but most agree that this event is recorded not only as a confirmation of the miracle of the restoration to life of the Shunamite boy but too God's dealing with the house of Omri one more time. To be sure many see this as an opportunity to malign the Bible and question its veracity but too often those who want to read the book as history pay no attention to history or to genre and what the Bible writer's are trying to accomplish. There is not first of all a work of the compilation 汇集 of history in the way modern western history is written today. The Bible is the revelation of God and the redemption of His people in the context of the antithesis 对照. As we have worked together through the events of the careers of Elijah and Elisha and their dealings with the House of Omri going all the way back to the building of Jericho we have come to know and love our patient gracious God who is slow to anger and yet is just and righteous in all that He does and these few verses again we are confronted with this wonder! The Lord is a God of grace and is greatly to be praised!

So we will look at the story as historical fact placed here in the narrative of Kings to make a point about the way God took care of this woman, how He worked through Elisha, and how He came to Israel and King Joram so that all might know that He is God and there is no other. I bring to you the Word of the Lord under the theme:

The Lord Provides for the Shunamite Woman Through the Work of Elisha:

1. The Word of the Lord 2. The Work of Lord 3. The Blessings of the Lord

The Word of the Lord Sometime after the restoration of the Shunamite woman's boy the LORD decided to send a severe famine across the land. Elisha we know from chapter four had been well provided for by this woman and her husband who had even provided a special room for Elisha so that when Elisha was on his journeys he would stop in there to be fed and for rest. Recall that the LORD took special care of his servant Elisha when many in Israel would not nor even cared for the man at all. But this woman confessed that Elisha was a holy man of God and that he should be taken care of. The LORD decided that she ought to be taken care of. Gehazi seemed to have some rapport 和睦的关系 with this woman and though Elisha had offered her help she wanted nothing for her kindness in return. But in time it became clear that her husband and she were saddened by the fact they had not been blessed with a child. When Elisha found this out he pronounced that she would have a son! And of course she did. One day the child was complaining of headaches and passed away. The woman stricken with grief did not even run to tell her husband but went straight to Elisha who went straight away with her sending Gehazi ahead with his staff. But when Gehazi laid Elisha's staff on the boy nothing happened. He lay there still. He was dead! However Elisha came and went to the boy and prayed over the boy three times and laid his body on the boy and the boy came back to life! Yes the LORD had performed yet another miracle that day in order to confirm the word bearer. Elisha was the servant of God. The Lord made this child rise from the dead. In time the great prophet Jesus of Nazareth came and by His own power as the Son of God raised a little girl and Lazarus from the dead! Amazing times so that the Word of the Lord might be proclaimed and believed!

The relationship must have continued and the wickedness of the house of Omri continued. The LORD once more came to His people in judgement for their sins of idolatry, wickedness and disobedience. Some wonder about the severity of the famine and the length thereof. They doubt that famines last that long. But there is no evidence to back their denials. They are simply the assertion 断言 of the self proclaimed wise ones. We however understand that our God is just right and true. His work now was to turn a nation back to Himself. He would work as He did in the days of Ahab and the three year drought 干旱 with this next generation that they might come to know that the rain and the crops and life comes from the hand of the LORD. Would Israel listen? Would Israel bend the knee 屈膝? Would they go back to church and worship God alone? Would they heed the Word of the LORD?

The woman of Shunem did and she was spared the suffering. She went to Philistia which because of its nearness to Egypt the bread basket of the Ancient Near East meant she would be well provided for her and her family could wait out those years. She listened and she was blessed. The LORD came to her in grace and embracing that grace she left her home and was spared suffering.

In the same way the LORD comes to our nation and our churches today. Many wonder about the plight 处境 of the U.S. and Canada. No perhaps it is not drought but the economy has many troubled. The Lord moves and the church now must take the opportunity to live in the blessings of obedience in seeking the rewards of the Christian calling to make known the grace of God to our nation.

We are like that woman of Shunem called sometimes to be obedient and that may in fact be difficult but we know that the Lord will prosper us for His name sake that those suffering and worried may turn to the Lord. When we come with the wonder of the grace

shown to us in Christ Jesus and the peace of life eternal we can live through these trying days with the optimism 乐观 of the triumph of the light of the world that is coming for us in time to bring us to full redemption.

As God came to the Shunamite woman in grace so the Word came to the house of Ahab and to us today. Embrace grace and the blessings will abound, but woe to those who refuse the blessings of grace!

The Work of Lord King Joram, or Jehoram as he also known it seems to us must have been rather rattled 摇摆, 震撼 by the Word of the Lord and so he called Gehazi into his presence. Because Gehazi is allowed into the King's presence many figure that this event must have happened before the healing of Naaman for why else would the king take such a chance? Still the king had not shown himself to be a man of the Torah. Others even wonder if Gehazi had in fact repented and in time was healed. But it seems more in keeping with the event that Gehazi was still Elisha's servant in good standing. We recalled already that he seemed to have a wonderful rapport with this woman and it would make sense that the king would invite Gehazi for consultation.

As the famine was nearing its end then the king wanted to know more about Elisha, who he was and what he was doing? You get the same sort feel again as when Elijah announces the famine and drought and then goes away. He becomes a man of mystery. He becomes a curiosity and so too the king understands that Elisha is someone to be reckoned 不可忽视 with but he does not understand that Elisha is the man of God and it is the LORD who must be reckoned with. So Gehazi while telling about what Elisha had done was really telling the King about the Lord. That

you see fits in with what the writer of Kings is doing as well. It is revelation of the great and glorious God. Yet as we know Gehazi did not really always understand these things either. Nonetheless he spoke to the king about the work that Elisha had been doing. He would have told the king about how Elisha left the family business behind and how he had walked with Elijah as Elijah's servant right with him till his last second on earth. He might have told the king how Elisha was taken to heaven and how Elisha took Elisha's robe and caused the Jordan river to part so he could walk to the other side or how he had made the bitter stew edible or made the axe head swim. But no story was more wonderful than when Elisha prayed over that dead boy three times and he came to life.

And by the hand of God who should walk in while he is telling that story but the woman herself! See the hand of the Lord here. See His mercy and His grace. This is the LORD coming to a king who does not ask Gehazi about the LORD but the man Elisha. The king does not recognize the LORD as king, but more than likely is concerned about himself and his own leadership. Then God comes to Him! So that Word is confirmed once more by a sign.

The woman came to the king because the king was the one who adjudicated 判决 land disputes 纠纷. When Gehazi sees her she is pointed out to the king and they hold forth together as he hears her plight 处境.

The wonder of the Old Testament accounts is that we are always left with the wonderful sovereignty of God. We are left in awe of 敬畏 the way He does things and his mercy and even respect for the king of his people. The Lord was ever so patient with Saul giving him time and revelation. He was ever so patient with Omri and Ahab. We think of Ahab's remorse 悔恨 that moved God to spare him for a while. Our God is patient and He is utterly 完全 fair 公平 in His

dealings with people. When we look back on the formation of the church, how He sent His Son the Word incarnate 化身 by the Virgin Mary to his own who had rejected grace for works righteousness and even His Son cries out to the Father to spare those who revelled in His crucifixion; how he overlooks our sin again and again and calls us to take the yoke of His Son who takes our burden of sin and guilt upon himself and away from the eyes of God; what can we do praise and serve this most wonderful God?

Because that is how he comes to us all. He comes by His will and His choice and He comes in that special way to call the elect and by Word and Spirit the church is born, and 7,000 do not bend the knee to Baal and a woman heeds the Word of the Lord and is safe from a famine and the church grows all over the world even today. Thy kingdom come! Thy will be done. Our God is building His Kingdom through His Son Jesus Christ- the seed of the woman and our LORD walks into the courts of the king with that woman and the king is genuinely 真正的 moved. Once more the LORD shows that He is God alone direct the affairs of history confronting kings with His power!

The Blessings of the Lord The woman had been taken care of by the Lord for those seven years but it was time to go home. We recall from chapter 4 that this woman and her husband were people of some means 财富 and had servants helping them to work the farm. In the mean time someone had taken her land and house. We think of Ahab who simply took over the house and land of Naboth and we understand the treachery 背信弃义 of it all. Either the King had conscripted 征召 it and gave to others or others simply took it and farmed as their own without getting the deed to the property. Pragmatically 务实地 we might say- well why not the land and house is sitting unattended to anyways why not take it over. But there is the integrity 正直 of

thing and of doing it the right way and that just was not the case anymore in Israel. What's more when the woman came back to claim what was hers she was not allowed to have back by those who had taken it over. Again there is no integrity and frankly that is what happens in a society without God. Chuck Colson has for some time now been lamenting 哀叹 the lack of honesty as the prime cause for so much of our economic break down and for the slow recovery of former communist countries. He points out that capitalism and free trade can only work if we trust each other and do and pay as say we will. People out for themselves rather than the betterment of the community at large will bring ruin in and over time if this is the majority mind set and sadly this philosophy of personal entitlement 权利 has wreaked 肆虐 the havoc 浩劫.

But we must move further. When the king heard her story and how God had taken care of her and her son and the subsequent story of how her land had been taken from her he immediately moved to remedy the situation. He sent an official with her who was commanded not only to restore her land but also to give to her the revenue 收入 of the years past that the land would have produced. Now we must see once more how the Lord had provided for this woman. Yes she had tasted the death of her son and had to get up and move. But she had also seen the resurrection of her son and was blessed with abundance, just like that widow with the oil. Always enough and then more so that Israel would know and we might know the LORD is God over all!

And what do we make of the king? He is so much like his father Ahab. Always halfway in his commitment he does not do the magnanimous 坦荡 thing with the woman but he does not after all of that bend the knee to the LORD. He does not kiss the Son! (Psalm 2) He continues in his obstinate 顽固的 paganism. The king does not hear those hooves 马蹄 in the distance does he?

He does not see the dust kicking up. The wrath of God is coming. The Syrians are coming and Jehu is coming. The wrath of God is coming. The day of salvation is today for the king, the Shunamite woman and for us! Blessings abounding 丰盛 for the faithful and the wrath of God upon a nation and king who are unfaithful!

Our God revealed himself through a man much like us and yet with a special calling and special work. He works now through His Son who is doing that work with His bride even today. The Lord has come to us this morning in grace and by grace we have heard. The Lord is impressive. He does marvelous 奇妙的 things and so we must repent and believe and taste the blessings of our God. Amen