

Guest speaker - Mr Scott Macleod

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[0 : 00] 2 Kings chapter 4 and we'll take up a reading from verse 8. This is the time of the prophet Elisha and the account of the Shunammite woman.

So let us read God's word together. Verse 8. One day Elisha went on to Shunammite, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food.

So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food. And she said to her husband, Behold, now I know that this is a holy man of God who is continually passing our way.

Let us make a small room on the roof with walls and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair and a lamp, so that whenever he comes, he can go in there.

One day he came there and he turned into the chamber and rested there. And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. When he had called her, she stood before him.

[1 : 21] And he said to him, Say now to her, See you have taken all this trouble for us. What is to be done for you?

Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army? She answered, I dwell among my own people.

And he said, What then is to be done for her? Gehazi answered, Well, she has no son, and her husband is old. He said, Call her.

And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. And he said, At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son. And she said, No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your servant.

But the woman conceived, and she bore a son about that time the following spring, as Elisha had said to her. When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers.

[2 : 26] And he said to his father, O my head, my head. The father said to his servant, Carry him to his mother. And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon.

And then he died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door behind him, and went out. Then she called her husband and said, Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may quickly go to the man of God, and come back again.

And he said, Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath. And she said, All is well. Then she saddled the donkey, and she said to her servant, Urge the animal on.

Do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you. So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi a servant, Look, there is the Shunammai.

Run at once to meet her and say to her, It's all well with you. It's all well with your husband. It's all well with your child. And she answered, All is well. And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet, and Gehazi came to push her away.

[3 : 57] But the man of God said, Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me, and has not told me. Then she said, Did I ask my Lord for a son?

Did I not say, Do not deceive me? He said to Gehazi, Tie up your garment, and take my staff in your hand, and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him.

If anyone greets you, do not reply. And lay my staff on the face of the child. Then the mother of the child said, As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.

So he arose and followed her. Gehazi went on ahead, and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life.

Therefore he returned to meet him, and told him, The child has not awakened. When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed.

[5 : 01] So he went in, and shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord. Then he went up, and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, his hands on his hands.

And he stretched himself upon the flesh, and the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up again, and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up, and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. Then he summoned Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her.

And when she came to him, he said, Pick up your son. She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son, and went out.

Amen. May the reading of God's word be blessed to us, as we come and consider these words before us. And we'll take as our text, what we read of in verse nine.

[6 : 14] And he said to our husband, Behold now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who is continually passing our way.

Specifically, look now, I know that this is a holy man of God. So today, as we look at this passage, and we'll consider this Shunammite lady in the morning, and in the evening, we've read the introductory passage that we find about this lady, and in the evening, we'll read the only other account we have of her.

During this time that Elisha lived, she came and met with her, and resided in her house, as she provided for him.

This unnamed Shunammite woman that we have, who was faithful to the words that the man of God gave to her, and she received a great grace from him.

So what can we say as we look at this woman? And we know very little of her. Well, she's offered great hospitality to the man. In verse 10, we can see that.

[7 : 34] Let us make a small room on the roof with walls, and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, a lamp, so that whenever he comes, he can go there. She shows a care to the well-being of Elisha.

And then, she receives a gift of a son in verse 16. At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son.

But she didn't believe it. And as we continue in our passage, we read that this wonderful gift that was given to her has been devastatingly robbed from her.

In verse 20, and when the child, after being sat on the mother's lap, we read, and then he died.

So, looking at this passage, I would like to consider what was given, what she gained, and we look at the grief that she experienced.

[8 : 44] So, her giving, her gain, and her grief. And while we look at it, I want to sort of paint the image of the Christian before you.

And specifically, specifically in the morning, the Christian in the early days of the Christian life. Perceiving and understanding who Christ is.

And following through in the evening, we look at the persevering Christian. And being faithful to his word in our lives. So, we'll begin with the giving.

We'll look at the gain, and we'll turn to look at the grief. Now, I'm sure you can all recall times when you have gone to someone's house, and you've been given a cup of tea, and you've been told that, you know, you can't go without a cup of tea.

You must have a cup of tea before you part, or have something to take with you. Maybe something of a lovable granny, or an elderly neighbour that stays beside you.

[9 : 52] They were imploring upon you to take something from them. And I sort of resemble, sort of resembling what we have here in this Shunammite lady.

She gave to this man as he came to the hurt village. And I suppose if we read that she was actually a notable woman in verse 8, it says that she was a wealthy woman.

So likely she was of good reputation, and she found herself willing to give, to share with what she had to this man.

And it was the case that when he travelled that way, he would turn in to her house. And so through this provision that she gave, we read that the relationship they had grew, and so does the perception that she had of this man.

For it says that he is, she understood him to be, a holy man of God, what we read of in verse 9. Maybe worth now more than the bread that she firstly offered, and without hesitation decides to

have constructed for this man somewhere where he can rest.

[11 : 19] It says in verse 11 that he turned one day and came there and turned into the chamber and rested there.

And maybe she didn't realise what she had provided was so significant for the man. a resting place for the man of God, a place for him to lay.

And how basic that provision was, even by today's standards, it was basic. But how excellent would this have been for Elisha, who more than likely did not have anywhere else to go.

and we do not know how he was revived or restored by this provision that the woman gave him. We do not know the prayers that he prayed under the lampstand or the meditations that he made in the night hours by what she gave to him, a comfortable place where he could rest and worship God.

And we might think, well, that's honorable behavior for her. And we might say that she acted just as Christ had taught in Matthew 25, to give a drink of water to those who are thirsty.

[12 : 49] But maybe that would imply that she was a believer, a believer in the God of Elisha. And though we cannot be completely sure on this at this point, I would like to suggest that she wasn't, or at least not yet.

But the workings of faith are beginning in her. And from that initial contact, we see the growth in her, of her knowledge of this man, enlightening her mind and slowly developing and gradually increasing.

we don't know how long it was before she could say, I know that this is a holy man of God. Was it weeks?

Was it years? We're not sure. But there has been a commitment made in her heart and a willingness to provide. And she forsakes the importance of other duties as she sees who this man is.

And that's often the case in our lives. The faith that works in us can take time. God can draw us to a place where we can begin, whether we know it or not, a random meeting or a word in season by someone.

[14 : 13] But the Lord works individually in our lives and in our experiences. as he reveals himself to us.

It may take months or it may take many, many years before you can perceive that this is God working in your life.

That this is Christ speaking to me. And the question is, do we recognize that voice? Do we recognize who Christ is?

And do we forsake all other duties when we do? You know how sad it would be to have the knowledge of Christ like she had, the knowledge of the man of God, and yet reason our salvation by some other means.

If we understood who Christ was and yet reason our salvation by other means than that faith in him. What we can do or what we can provide, many people are willing to give what they have of their wealth thinking that they can gain something by what they give.

[15 : 35] but we all know that their money will buy us no entrance through the gates of glory. No payments, whether it be of money or of time, will justify our salvation.

Supposing we give it all and yet we withhold the giving of our soul and faith to the one who we perceive to be the man of God, the son of God, Christ Jesus.

And we may not build a house for anyone, but we may not even understand what we have done in the little that we have given.

When we give such a little thing to someone, it may mean so much to the other. But the one that holds faithfully to Christ will pray.

And in a prayerful sense, we can support one another in this way. That may be worth more than anything you can give them.

[16 : 57] That may be like gold to the person. God may never truly understand the prayers that we make, how God may use them in the lives of others.

And we may feel ourselves that our prayers are so insignificant and feel like we've not given much time to prayer. But the Lord hears our prayers.

God and we pray that he would make it greater than gold as we bring people to him.

But the one who perceives the man of God, the one who understands who Christ Jesus is, I believe will give. Will give something.

But the question is how much are we willing to give? Or how much have you willingly given? It may come gradually to us, but are we willing to give everything?

[18:07] Have you given everything? Have you given your life to Christ? Have you given up on your ambitions? Have you given yourself?

Because I believe when we perceive who Christ is. When our hearts and eyes are seeing who Christ is, as we should, and as he is, we will give everything of what we are.

We will humbly give our lives, all that I am. Because we can say, without him, I am nothing. Without what he has done at Calvary, I am nothing.

And then, and only then, we are willing to give all of what we are. And then, when we do give of everything that I am, and trust fully in Christ, we gain.

And we gain so greatly by his grace. so what have you given? And what will you gain? So we look now at gain.

[19:27] What happens in the case of Our Lady? After having so willingly given, and continues to do so, she finds she has a great gain in the miracle of the son being born to her.

We read in verse 13, And he said to him, Say to her now, see you have taken all this trouble for us. What is to be done for you?

Would you have a word spoken on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army? And she answered, I dwell among my own people. The man of God was offering to her to speak to the king.

And what does she say? I dwell among my own people. And looking at that answer that she had given, it's not really clear to us today what she means, but essentially what she says is, I'm happy with what I have.

I'm content with what I've got. I dwell among my own people happily. And she does not wish for any preferential treatment from anyone else, or any bias from any stately authority as a king.

[20:39] or commander. It seems that she has it all. She has her house, her wealth, and her reputation. And she has generously given to the Lord's cause, and maybe in her own mind is reasoning that she will gain something because of what she has given.

She's saying, I'm happy with my Lord. And this is my reasoning for my thoughts in saying that I don't think she was a Christian or believer earlier. I don't believe anyone who believed in God personally had an opportunity for a request to be made on behalf of her or him.

by the man who we perceive to be the man of God, the son of God, would respond by saying, I'm happy with what I have.

I'm content with what I got. I dwell among my own people. Would you, given that opportunity, from this holy man of God, God, if he comes before you, this once in a lifetime chance that he would do something for you, would you respond by saying, I'm happy with what I have, and walk away.

She doesn't even mention a prayer on her behalf or asks the man to remember her household in prayer before God. God, and it's in fact quite dangerous that we can be content in our life, we can give something to God's cause, expecting something good in return for what we have given, and yet be without salvation, and yet having some knowledge of Christ.

[22:36] But we perceive him incorrectly, so we do not give everything of what we are, we do not give of ourselves. But Christ is the one who gave everything for you.

He gave 100% of what he was for you. Is that true of any listening here today?

Christ has paid for your sins. He has willingly given himself to Calvary and died on that cross.

And can you really say, as he stands before you in the word of scripture, and he comes before you, willing to go to the Father on your behalf, willing to offer intercession him, on your behalf?

Are you happy enough to say to him, I dwell among my own people? Can you say to him, I'm content with the life that I have?

[23:52] Many people do. Many people walk away, but Christ stands before you with that offer. He will go to the Father for you.

But thanks and praise be to God, that even when we walk away, that even though we may reject his offer, even though our hearts are divided and we do not understand him as we should, we do not love him for who he is, he loves us.

He has loved us first and he will graciously redeem his people, even when we refuse him to speak on our behalf.

He still loves us. And this Shunammite lady, in a sense, she's blindly content. But Elisha is just about to make known to her blindness by giving her the son.

By giving her this gift of a child, she had no heir to her wealth. And this child was something completely unattainable for her.

[25 : 16] And it was miraculous that she has been given, in a sense, this new life, this future life. She's gained a great hope and a new life and a future.

And I just want to give you an image to help us in our thoughts. But this child is like salvation to the Christian believer. And it is not flawless, as most images aren't.

but this child, if we reference it to salvation, was given completely out of her control. It was given to her beyond what she thought was even possible.

And it's become so precious to her. Precious beyond anything that she ever had before. Anything that she thought would have made her content before.

And it is wondrous in its revealing to us. And maybe even for some of you, something that we would have doubted we would have ever have received.

[26 : 39] A salvation that we didn't believe we could ever have gained. But we may not realize, well, we are not beyond salvation.

We are not beyond the gifts of Christ. God's ability to work in us, according to his season, according to his time. And salvation may come to few with a surprise, but many is a gradual process, a persuading and enabling, as the catechism tells us, to embrace Jesus Christ.

As we sit at his feet through his word, he will come to you. And in a sense, he does not say, what will I do for you?

But rather, he says, it is done for you. what a gift we gain in Christ. But without him we gain nothing at all.

Without Christ we are lost. We are lost in an eternal grief without. So let us turn and consider for the last few moments what the lady lost.

[28 : 01] But the grief that she knew was only temporary. So we look at her grief. We can read in verse 18.

And when the child had grown, he went out one day to the father among the reapers. And he said to his father, O my head, my head. The father said to his servant, carry him to his mother.

And when he had lifted him, and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon. And then he died. Her son had suffered some sort of head injury.

She tried best to comfort him. But of all her efforts, the child that she loved had died. And we know that he did die. And knowing the story now, we know that he did not die.

His death was not ultimate. And I suppose it does not fit entirely with the image I presented as the gift of the child, being that of salvation to the believer.

[29 : 09] For the salvation that we receive shall never die. Yet, I feel it is worthy to us to apply it as such.

For it is so often, if we are honest with ourselves, it can feel like it does. us. And as it can appear to us, and the devil can convince ourselves that we have lost our salvation.

Or maybe we have lost something that we thought we would never have gained, like the woman.

And often this can unsettle the new believer. And maybe not in the first few months or the first year, as we experience these great changes and the future hope that we have, the experience of this new life.

But it is an honest confession that we can feel that I am just as I was. And I can question, well, was I ever saved?

And the child in our story was not affected straight away. It was when the child had grown. And so often there is a time before these challenges come to the new believer.

[30 : 31] But the big difference for this lady is here. There's a huge difference here from what she said to the man before. She said, I was happy with what I have before.

And now she was not content. she thought she was before. But after tasting this gift that had been given to her in the child, she feared to part with it.

It would have returned her to exactly the same state in which she was before. she was but she knows now what she has gained.

She understands what has been given to her. And it's completely personal to the Christian. And that's the woman who hid the child and did not declare his death.

But she shut the door upon him and she felt the anguish of the situation within her soul as she felt that there was something in this.

[31 : 46] And the Christian feels that salvation has died in them. It is entirely personal and we're scared to tell anyone or talk to anyone about how we feel.

And in our distresses can we say as a woman it is all well. But if we are doubting our salvation what happens in the story?

she tried all her own efforts to comfort the child but was unable. Every effort on her behalf was no good. It was not until the boy had died that she acted.

And what did she do? She put him upon the prophet's bed and sought straight away to find the man of God. And this is our example too.

And maybe it will take a deep unsettling in our experience to go and find the one of power, the one who gave this new life to you, the Christ, that we do not sit and weep over how we feel.

[32 : 59] She did not mourn over her son. and we know as Christians the workings of Christ within us shall never die. So that we go and seek him out.

That we go and return to this man who has the words of power, who has given us a new hope and a new life. No other man would do for her. She did not seek the aid of her husband, nor the servant. no other voice would do but the voice of the man of God, the one who gave this gift. And so similarly for the Christian, no other man will do but Christ, the one who has gifted you with eternal life.

Her confidence lies in no other man, but that we fall at his feet when our soul is in deep troubles.

And how I wish I could restore any assurances that you may feel yourselves lacking, but my efforts would fare just as the servant he has is.

It is nothing but the breath of God. God's word is our revival when we are feeling low. And I hope you as Christians can recall days when you have known this to be true in your lives.

[34 : 31] Though we may doubt God at times, it does not mean that we forsake him entirely. This Shunammite had her doubts, but they are closely followed with a beautiful confession of verse 30.

as the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you. Christian, and everyone will have hard days.

But you know that as you look back on your life, the days when you were without him, they're empty. you thought you were content before.

You thought you were happy enough before without Christ. But now that what you're looking at the great grace that has been gained and gifted to you, we cannot give up on this new life.

There's no other like him, there's no power like him. We've perceived and understood who he is, and we can't go to anyone else. We have to fall at his feet.

[35 : 49] He is the one who has given me hope. He is the one who has given me a future, a future more sure than this Shunammite son. When Elijah came, it says that they prayed to the Lord.

Christ is one who prays for you. And in that way, each of us will be kept, as he did for Peter, when he predicted that Peter would deny him.

In Luke 22, it says, Satan has demanded you, but I have prayed that your faith may not fail. sin will rear itself in death, but death is conquered by the one who prays for you.

Jesus has conquered death, and so his loving and prayerful intercession for you will enable you to say, I will not leave you.

I will not leave thee, as he prays for you. Can you say that today? Is that the words of your confession?

[37 : 16] As the Lord lives and as thy soul lives, I will not leave thee, because he will not leave you. give our lives to him, and we will gain a great grace.

And so for the Christian, though we might know griefs in our lives, it is not grief at all. All that awaits them is glory, and all shall say what I have gained in Christ Jesus, far exceeds all of the little that I gave.

He'll exceed us, he'll exceed greatly of the little that I give while I am here. And who else can we go to?

The one who will be with us, who will not depart from us, one who prays for us, and loves us, even when we fail him, and he will give us a sure hope, and a sure future.

The question is, do we understand who Christ is? Do we know who Christ is? And that has he given us that hope, and has he given us that future?

[38 : 55] We pray these thoughts will be blessed to us today. I'll just say a short prayer, and then we'll conclude in praise. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for this time together.

And if you look upon that Shunammite lady, we see one who came and fell at your feet in her need, in the weaknesses that she knew.

Lord, we pray that you would restore to us the joy of your salvation. Lord, help us to know that you are one who does not leave us, and shall never leave us, and continually shall intercede for us, that we come and request with all the pains of our hearts before you who is so faithful to us.

We pray that you continue with us, in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll conclude by praise and singing in Psalm 106 of the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 106 in the Scottish Psalter. And we'll sing from verse 1 down to verse 5.

[40 : 06] That's on page 378. Give praise and thanks unto the Lord, for bountiful is he, his tender mercy doth endure unto eternity.

God's mighty works who can express or show forth all his praise, blessed are they that judgment keep and justly do always. Remember me, Lord, with that love which thou to thine despair, with thy salvation, O my God, to visit me drawn near, that I, thy chosen good, may see, and in their joy rejoice, and may with thine inheritance triumph with cheerful voice.

We'll sing these verses to God's praise, and we'll stand to sing. praise and thanks of turn the Lord, for bountiful is he, his tender mercy doth endure unto eternity.

And God's mighty words through God express our show forth all his praise, blessed are they the judgment keep and justly do always.

remember me your rhythm love which thou do thine despair, with thy salvation hold hope my God turn this and me throw near that I thy chosen we try no word

[43 : 13] Spirit us, thine up with cheerful voice.

Lord, the inheritance that awaits us, we do not fully understand, but it shall be so glorious to us.

Lord, we pray that you be with us as we part, that we may know your Spirit dwelling amongst us and in us, and know the love of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And with every knowledge of the Father that is revealed to us through your Word, Lord, be with us as we part, remain with us, encourage us as we walk along life's way, through many difficulties.

Lord, we pray that we would confess that we will not leave thee. Lord, we pray these things in the power of your name, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.