

July 24, 2022

“A King Acts on a Widow’s Behalf”  
Lesson 4 of Unit

2 Kings 8:1-6

**Intro**

Today’s story centers on a Shunamite woman who has been blessed by God twice. Shunam is a city in the southeast part of Galilee, near the town of Jezreel. The woman in our passage first was blessed by Elisha to have a son after being childless. Then, after the son dies suddenly, Elisha restores the child to life.

In our passage today, this same woman has left her home for 7 years due to a famine. When she returns, she seeks the restoration of her land, which apparently has been taken over by someone during her absence.

**Read 2 Kings 8:1-6**

1. vs. 1: This verse comes after Elisha has brought the dead son back to life
  - He is the spokesman for God, telling the woman a 7-year famine is coming
  - This warning also comes with helpful instruction
    - Leave—go somewhere else (with your family) that’s not affected by the famine
  - Note God’s continuing care for this woman
    - Promise of a child
    - Raising the child from the dead
    - Now warning her to flee because of a coming famine
  - Part of this care/concern is because the woman provided room/board for Elisha
  - See 2 Kings chapter 4
  
2. vs. 2: The woman’s faith is seen by her actions
  - She “proceeded to do as the man of God said”
  - They go to the land of the Philistines for the duration of the famine
  - Elisha tells her to go “wherever you can” in vs. 1
  - The Philistines have been a long-term enemy of the Israelites
  - But David brought them into submission in 2 Samuel 5
    - They don’t appear to be a threat by the time of this incident
    - They woman apparently has no fear about going into their land
  
3. vs. 3: The woman returns after the 7 years, but there is a big problem
  - The text says she “went to the king to beg for her house and land”
  - While she was gone, it has been taken over by someone else, not named here
  - There are several things not explained here which seem important toward understanding
    - Did she have to consult other authorities before coming to the king?
    - Does she not have access to a “kinsman-redeemer” like Naomi had in Boaz?
    - Her husband appears to be dead now, as he is not the one going to the king
    - Did her family take possession of the land, and are now refusing to return it to her?
    - Did the king seize the property?

None of these are addressed

All that we see is the woman's desperation to get her home back

She goes to the highest authority, the king, to get help

4. vs. 4: The story changes its focus from the woman to the king she is going to ask help from  
Though not named, many sources believe this king to be Joram (Jehoram)

He is the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the two sons of Ahab, a notably wicked king

Both the sons are noted as being wicked like their father

It appears, however, that this king is not as wicked as Ahab

Gehazi, Elisha's servant, is there in the presence of the king at this very moment

He asks Gehazi, "Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done"

This seems to be a sincere interest in Godly things

Elisha is known as "the man of God"

5. vs. 5: As Gehazi is telling the king about Elisha's deed, in walks the Shunammite woman

Gehazi says, "This is the woman...this is her son whom Elisha restored to life"

God's timing here is awesome to see

The king asks, Gehazi answers, and the woman of the story appears!

Notice that she brings her son with her

Maybe he just travels with her everywhere

However, maybe his presence will stir up the king's sympathy for her situation

Who wants a young child to be homeless?

6. vs. 6: Several interesting things happen here

First, "the king asked the woman about it, and she told him"

Did he ask about the son being raised to life again?

Did he ask about the woman's claim to getting her land back?

The verse is not specific about what the king asked her about—maybe both

Second, "he assigned an official to her case"

The king takes action

He also gives this official specific instructions about what he is to do

He doesn't just pass the case on to someone and wash his hands of it

He takes an active interest, and with his power, ensures justice will be done

Third, the official is instructed to "give back everything that belonged to her"

Her land / house will be returned

Additionally, she is to be given the income produced from the land the last 7 years

The land was in a famine; the amount is not going to be staggering

However, any amount is likely more than the woman expected to receive

She just wanted her land back

God is not specifically mentioned in this account, but His hand is all over it

He has been working through Elisha, who is called "the man of God"

He has given her a son when she didn't have one, and unexpected blessing

He had Elisha warn her about the famine, with instructions of how to survive it

Now He has the king restore her land to her, with additional blessings

God is at work in this king as he was in Elisha

One other thing about this king (Joram)

His attitude toward another's property is vastly different than his parents (Ahab/Jezebel)  
They falsely accused Naboth so they could take his land, which they wanted  
Joram returns the land to the one who had a rightful claim to it

Application: God shows his care for the Shunammite woman in this passage. He does not forget her. Nor does He forget any of His people. But there are people in our world who can feel forgotten or abandoned. Sometimes we think of those in difficult financial situations, and we should help where we can. But our time is another resource we have. Our text brought up those who are in nursing homes, who many have limited contact with family or friends from outside the nursing home. The suggestion from the text was how a visit from one of us to them would be a blessing, maybe even leading to a regular friendship.

No doubt there are other groups of people who fit into the "forgotten" category. We are encouraged by Scripture to remember "the least of these", meaning to do something for them. In Matthew 25 where Jesus gives this lesson, all of the things mentioned are needs: hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison. Sometimes those people will come into our paths, and the Spirit will prompt us to aid them. Sometimes, however, we will need to sacrifice some time and plans to go to those we know who are in these conditions.

Prayer: Father God, thank You for Your continual care for us, for the many blessings we receive daily. Thank You for the people and circumstances You have used to bless us. Help us to be open to the Spirit's directing so that we can help meet the needs of others. In Jesus' name, Amen.