

Series: Stand Fast In the Lord

THE SHUNAMITE WOMAN

2 KINGS 4

Text:

Introduction:

Illustration:

It was early on the morning of January 11, 1943 and Tom Sullivan was the only one moving about the kitchen of the house at 98 Adams Street in Waterloo, Iowa.

He had awakened that morning to prepare for work and, while fixing breakfast, he noticed that a black sedan arrived at the house.

Three men in Navy uniforms walked to the front door and had been welcomed inside his home.

The Sullivan patriarch knew before they spoke that they were bringing news about his sons.

He also knew the news wouldn't be happy news. Tom asked them right up front, "Which one?"

Lieutenant Commander Truman Jones swallowed hard. It was the saddest, most disagreeable task of his Naval career.

The Commander said, "I'm sorry. "All five boys."

As the rest of the family gathered in the living room. It was a moment filled with sorrow and grief.

Commander Jones steeled himself to finish his unenviable task and continued, "The Navy Department deeply regrets to inform you that your sons Albert, Francis, George, Joseph and Madison Sullivan are missing in action in the South Pacific."

The ship they served on, had been vaporized when a torpedo struck the damaged ship filled with leaking fuel oil from a battle the night before.

The news wasn't completely unexpected.

Over the last month there had been hints of something amiss.

The mail stopped coming from the boys and a letter from a neighbor's son who was in the Navy mentioned that their ship had sunk.

The Sullivan Brothers had been close, looking out for each other, enlisting together, and living by the family

motto they had echoed to a Naval recruiter only a year earlier: *We Stick Together*.

That is the way they lived and the way they died for their country.

The death of one child is bad enough, but the death of five at one time must have been very difficult for the Sullivan family.

No parents should have to witness the death of their own children, but it happens all the time.

Such is the case in this portion of 2 Kings Chapter four.

We find that a mother loses her child and God's miraculous intervention.

Note:

Sermon Content:

1. CONSIDERATION OF THE SHUNAMITE WOMAN (VS. 8-10)

2 Kings 4:8-10

⁸ And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. ⁹ And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. ¹⁰ Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

Elisha had a divine appointment.

There was someone the Lord wanted him to meet and the woman to meet.

The prophet traveled extensively through the region from Mt. Carmel.

While passing through the town of Shunem, he was greeted by a woman in the town.

She was very kind and considerate of him.

It says that she constrained him to eat bread.

The word constrained means that she continually or repeatedly ask him to stay and rest.

She sensed he needed food and rest since there were no restaurants or rest areas in those days.

It is interesting to note that the word Shunem means "double rest or quiet."

This is what this lady was offering the prophet.

Her generosity and example were recorded by the Lord so that we could be challenged by her life 3000 years later.

We do not know her name.

God omitted this from us, but God knows who she was and will reward her accordingly.

She has been gone for three thousand years, but her life continues to challenge us today.

Thought:

Will your life and mine impact other people for the glory of God after we die?

Understand that selfishness blinds us to opportunities to touch people's lives.

It leaves a person miserable and eventually asking,
"What is the purpose of my life?"

Why am I here?

What is life all about?"

This Shunammite woman discerned Elisha's needs
because she was observant.

She was alert and paying attention to the needs of
someone else.

She also discerned his character and that Elisha was a
holy man of God.

What a great example and legacy that Elisha lived
before others.

It is the same example we are to live, too.

Note:

1 Peter 1:15

*¹⁵ But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy
in all manner of conversation;*

People are watching your life and example.

Note not only the Consideration of this woman but also:

2. THE CALL TO THE SHUNAMITE WOMAN (vs. 11-15)

2 Kings 4:11-15

¹¹ And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. ¹² And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. ¹³ And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. ¹⁴ And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. ¹⁵ And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

Time passed and Elisha stopped off at the prophet chamber prepared for him.

Traveling with him was his servant, Gehazi.

He gave instructions to him to call the Shunammite woman and she came to see the prophet.

The purpose of this appointment was to find out what he could do to be a blessing to this Shunammite woman.

He wanted to reward her for her character and generosity.

Many today place so much emphasis on looks and beauty but the emphasis should be placed on character, generosity, kindness, responsibility, honesty, wisdom, morality, and hard work.

The woman had been "careful with all this care."

This phrase means that she had gone out of her way to take care of them, meet their needs, and be kind to them.

Elisha asked if she needed anything from the king or the military commanders.

Knowing her husband was old, Elisha offered his influence to provide her and her property with royal protection.

The Shunammite answered and told Elijah, "I dwell among my own people."

The woman was giving to Elisha an answer of contentment. She did not want anything from the

courts or the king. If she wanted something from the king when it was not needed, she would reveal a desire for fame and prestige.

She was not interested in that at all.

From this woman we are reminded of the importance of learning to be content.

Yes, contentment has to be learned because our natural instinct is to be selfish and greedy.

God wants us to learn to be content with His provisions, our place, and position in life.

Note:

1 Timothy 6:6

⁶ *But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

1 Timothy 6:8

⁸ *And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

Philippians 4:11

¹¹ *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

God wants us to get our focus off the things we covet and be thankful and grateful for what He has provided for us. He wants us to learn to count our blessings.

Psalms 68:19

¹⁹ Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.

Elisha really wanted to do something special for the Shunnamite.

He asked Gehazi, "What can we do?" Gehazi told Elisha a need that this woman did have.

She did not have any children and her husband was an elderly man.

In Bible times, barrenness was considered a reproach in Israel.

Children were considered to be a wonderful blessing from the Lord Himself unlike today where mothers have become murderers, slaughtering their children in what should be the most sacred and safest place of a baby's life... her womb.

For 1.3 million babies a year in America, the womb has gone from a place of wonder to a place of woe.

The womb has become the stopping off point to the tomb for many babies.

Unfortunately, most aborted babies don't even get a tomb.

They are discarded into garbage dumpsters or incinerated.

We have considered the Consideration of this Woman and the Call to this Woman.

Note also:

3. THE CONCEPTION AND BIRTH OF A BABY WERE PROMISED (VSS. 16-17)

2 Kings 4:16-17

¹⁶ *And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.*

¹⁷ *And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.*

Elisha informed the Shunammite woman that she was going to have a baby about one year later.

God would give her a child. Our Lord is the Creator of life.

The development of a baby in the womb and the wonder of the human body demonstrate the wisdom and power of God and the miracle of birth.

Imagine what she felt when she heard that promise from Elisha.

She considered what he said to be accurate, valid, and truthful.

She begged Elisha to not tease her, deceive her, or get her hopes up about a matter like this.

Elisha was serious, however, and sure enough, the next year, this woman gave birth to her own baby boy just as Elisha promised.

This leads us to consider:

4. THE CHILD DIES (VSS. 18-21)

2 Kings 4:18-21

¹⁸ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. ¹⁹ And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. ²⁰ And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. ²¹ And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.

Several years passed. The Shunammite's little boy was around four or five years old.

I'm sure she was so proud of him. He was her pride and joy.

It was harvest time and the fields were busy with reapers.

This little lad walked out to where his father and the reapers were gleaning the fields.

This little fellow began to complain about his head hurting.

I'm sure he was crying and probably saying, "My head hurts! Daddy, my head hurts!"

The father looks him over and his servant was instructed to carry the boy back home to his mother immediately.

When he arrives, the Shunammite woman placed her son on her lap for a while and she tried to comfort him.

By lunch time, the boy stopped crying and became silent.

He was not asleep, however.

He died on her lap. He was here, and then he was gone.

Little did the father realize that day in the field that his little son would die.

Without God's miraculous intervention, he would never see his little man alive again.

You never know when you will see someone alive for the last time.

Treasure each day with the people you love.

Don't assume you will see your family or friends at a later time.

Their lives may end in unexpected ways or your life could end.

Realizing her son had died, this mother took her little boy's body, carried it up the stairs and laid him on Elisha's bed in the prophet's chamber.

She then left, closed the door behind her, leaving her breathless, lifeless little boy in the silence in the empty room.

Understand, however, this mother had plans to return to her son with hope in her heart.

She was on a mission as we will see.

When we look at the Shunammite woman, we find she was somewhat prepared for she was a woman who loved God.

That's how you prepare for trauma.

You do your best to stay close to the Lord and anchor your soul, your being, your heart in the promises of God's precious Word.

There is great comfort to know that the Lord knows what we can handle.

1 Corinthians 10:13

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Close:

We'll close now and will Lord willing continue this message this evening.

Let's consider a few thoughts.

Are we aware of the needs of those around us?

Are we trying to help meet those needs?

Are content with what we have?

How do we handle the trials in our lives? They will either drive us from the Lord or draw us to Him. They will either cause us to get bitter or better. Those choices are up to us.