

Wednesday, October 5, 2022 ▫ Read 2Kings 4:8–37

Questions from the Scripture text: Where did Elisha go in v8? Who was there? What did she persuade him? When else did this happen? To whom does she speak in v9? What does she call Elisha? What does she say he is doing? What does she ask to prepare in v10? For what purpose? What does Elisha do in v11? To whom does Elisha speak in v12? What does he tell Gehazi to do? What does he tell Gehazi to ask in v13? What are some options that he suggests? What does she answer? What does Elisha then ask Gehazi (v14a)? What suggestion does Gehazi now make in v14b? What does Elisha tell Gehazi to do (v15a)? What do we see her doing again (v15b, cf. end of v12)? What does Elisha tell her in v16a? How does she respond to this (v16b)? But what happens in v17? According to what? How is the child doing (v18)? But then what happens one day? What does he say in v19? Whom does his father tell to do what? What does the servant do (v20)? What happens with the child? Where does his mother lay him (v21)? What does she do? Whom does she ask for what in v22? What does he want to know (v23)? Why is it strange? How does she answer? What does she tell the servant in v24? To whom does she go (v25)? Where? Who sees her? To whom does he speak? What does he say? What does he tell Gehazi to do (v26)? And to ask? How does she answer Gehazi? To whom does she come in v27? Where? What does she do to him? What does Gehazi start to do? What does Elisha say? Why? And what has Yahweh done/not done? What two things does she say in v28? To whom does Elisha respond (v29)? What does he tell him to do? What does he tell him not to do? What is he to do as soon as possible? Who is determined not to leave Elisha (v30)? How does she say it? What does Elisha do? Who goes ahead (v31)? What does he do? What doesn't happen? Where does he go back? What does he say? Who comes into the house in v32? What does he find? Where does he go (v33)? What does he do with the door? What does he do to whom? Then what five things does he do in v34? With what result? Where does Elisha go in v35? What does he go up and do again? With what results this time? Whom does he call in v36? What does he tell him to do? Who comes? What does he tell her to do? What does she do first in v37? Then what?

What are some of the surprises of grace? 2Kings 4:8–37 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these thirty verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **God's grace is predictably great but greatly unpredictable**.

The great theme of this narrative is surprises. Throughout it, God is wonderfully merciful to all, but He keeps His counsel to Himself, and His grace is often unpredictable. What are some of the surprises?

A "great" woman who is godly, v8–13. There are a few others in the Bible, but they are rare. Usually "prominent woman" is a portent of bad things. And this prominent Shunammite comes sandwiched between prominent women Jezebel and Athaliah. Literally the text says, "where there was a great woman, and she laid hold of him..." (v8). That doesn't sound like it's going to end well.

But she laid hold of him like my grandmother used to lay hold of me: to make sure that he ate some of her food. Why does she so insist? Because Elisha is a "holy man of God" (v9). God's grace to her is such that she contentedly desires no reward; Shunem is fine with her; no need for a place in the royal court (v13). It's also surprising that Elisha implies that he has any sway with these!

A godly woman who doubts, v14–17. To be fair, Sarah had done similarly (cf. Gen 18:10–15). But we are accustomed to lionizing people who act in the manner that we see in v9–10, 13. So when she's unwilling to believe that the Lord would do such a thing for her (v16), we remember that God's grace is for people of small faith like our own.

A child of promise who dies, v18–20. When we get to the end of v18, we don't expect that the next verse to feature a fatal head wound. Sometimes God's grace surprises us with sorrow. Ultimately, this story doesn't end in sorrow. Ultimately, no believer's story does (cf. Rom 8:17).

A bereft mother who keeps her cool, v21–26. She knows that hope is in Elisha's God. She tells her husband that all is well (v23). She tells Gehazi that all is well (v26). She's in a hurry (v24), but she is composed. Clearly she isn't sure that she will get her son back (v28). Yet, her statement that all is well does not come off as a lie. Rather, it seems that she is resigned to whatever the Lord brings.

A prophet from whom the Lord has hidden things, v27–29. The woman believes that Elisha, the representative of God's Word to her, is her only hope. When she finally gets to him, she lays hold of him (v27, same word as in v8), and in v30 she insists on staying with him. But Elisha hasn't been told, and he calls this Yahweh "hiding" it from him (v27).

A prophet whose prophetic signs fail, v30–32. Gehazi comes back with bad news. The staff thing did not work (v31). Elisha comes in, and there's the dead child on his own bed (v32).

God, Who deals personally and privately with his prophet, v33–37. The closed door has become a motif (v4, 21, 33). The Lord could have healed the boy via the staff. The Lord could have healed the boy via the prayer in v33. The Lord could have healed the boy in the initial stretching out in v34. But the Lord brings him to an extremity of dependence. Whether we are

an unnamed widow or the highest officer in God's earthly church, He's dealing with us too, and we are to deal with Him Who sees us in secret (cf. Mt 6:1-16).

The unpredictability of God's grace is surprising but good, because He is good. And powerful. And merciful. However it surprises in your life, if you are His through Jesus Christ, know that it is His grace behind every surprise!

What situation in your life is perplexing you right now? If you belong to God through Christ, what is behind that situation? What are the means of grace by which you can draw near to Him for help?

Sample prayer: Lord, as with Elisha and the woman from Shunem, so with us Your providence often perplexes us. Forgive us for when we are unbelieving. Forgive us for when we presume that we should be able to understand You, or that You should do things the way that we prefer. Grant unto us to trust in You through Christ, and do with us according to Your perfect wisdom, power, and love, we ask in Jesus's Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP109D "I Am Very Poor and Needy" or TPH551 "We Plow the Fields"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Second Kings, 4 verses 8 through 37. These are God's words, not happened. One day that Elisha went to Shunam where there was a notable woman and she persuaded him to eat some food. So, it was as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food.

And she said to her husband, look. Now I know that this is a holy man of God. Who passes by us regularly, Please. Let us make a small upper room on the wall. Let us put a bed frame there and a table, and a chair and a lampstand. So it'll be whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there and it happened.

One day that he came there and he turned into the upper room and lay down there and he said to Gehazi his servant called a might woman when you had called her. She stood before him, and he said to him, say now to her Look, you've been concerned for us with all this care.

What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak in your behalf to the king or the commander of the army? She answered. I dwell among my own people So he said, what then is to be done for her and Gehazi answered. Actually, She has no son and her husband is old.

So, he said call her, he had called her. She stood in the doorway, then he said about this time. Next year, you shall embrace a son. And she said, no, my lord, man. Of God did not lie to your maidservant But the woman conceived and bore a son when the appointed time had come of which Elisha had told her and the child grew That happened.

One day that he went out to his father to the Reapers and he said to his father in my head, my head. So he said to a servant carry him to his mother when he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees, till noon, and then died.

And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him and went out. Then she called to her husband and said, please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys I may run to the man of God and come back.

So he said, why are you going to him today? There's neither new moon or Sabbath and she said it as well. And she saddled donkey and said to her servant drive and go forward. Do not slack in the pace for me unless I tell you. And so, she departed and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

So, it was when the man of God saw her far off that he said to his servant Gehazi. Look, the Shunamite woman, please run now to meet her and say to her. Is it well with you? Is it? Well, with your husband? Is it well with a child and she answered it as well.

Now, when she came to the man of God at the hills, she caught him by the feet but Gahazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, let her alone for her. Soul is in deep distress and he also has hidden it from me. And he has not told me.

So she said, did I ask a son of my Lord? Did I not say, do not deceive me? Then he said to Ghazi, get yourself ready. Take my staff in your hand beyond your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him and if you anyone greets, you do not answer him but lay my staff on the face of the child, and the mother of the child said, is Yahweh lives.

And is your soul lives. I will not leave you So heroes and followed her. Now Ghazi went on ahead of them and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was neither a voice nor hearing therefore, he went back to me, Him and told him saying the child is not awakened and Elisha came into the house.

There was the child lying dead on his bed. He went in, therefore, shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to Yahweh. He went up and lay on the child and put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands.

Stretched himself out on the child and the child flush of the child became warm, he returned and walked back and forth in the house. And again, went up and stretched himself out on him and then the child sneezed seven times in the child opened his eyes and he called Ghazi and said call this genomic woman.

So he called her and when she came into him, he said pick up your son. So, she went in fell at his feet bowed to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.

So for the reading of God's inspired and narrant word, Let's continue as the section and second Kings where it's showing the works of Gehazi by the spurt of God. And this particular passage is marked by great surprises. It's a reminder to us that as God works and His grace, it's not always like we think as gracious work.

Well look, it's often surprising and comes and unexpected ways. The first is that there's a notable woman who is godly, this is rare in the Bible and God's good providence to us. We're just at the end of Acts 13 and the prominent women. But even in the context of the prominent women who were easily stirred up by the Jews to persecute Paul and Barnabas.

But even in the context of 2nd Kings, a prominent woman, who has godly is an odd thing. The, the area that we're in is kind of sandwiched between Jezebel and Athalia. There certainly we're prominent women but our two of the greatest examples of ungodliness and all the Bible male or female.

And so here's prominent woman. Who's is godly? She recognizes that Elisha is a man of God. She calls him. Holy, she advocates to show him. Hospitality. The next surprise is that there's nothing that she wants from the man of God, he says to her. What can I do for you?

And she is not interested in him doing anything for her. And within this one, there's an even greater surprise, I think. And that is that Elisha has clout with the king in the commander of the army. Isn't an interesting that the text so far has just skipped over that point.

But apparently, if he speaks up for for the tsunamite woman, she would be received at the King's court. She doesn't want to be at the Kings Court. She wants to be with her people. Her plan. Her household her husband. Even though she has no children, she recognizes something from the Word of God about family and household and inheritance in particular, which was tied to a particular portion of land.

If you were in Israelite. And so, she is a little bit here like Bartletta Gileadite was with David, when David invited him back to Jerusalem with him. After the incident with Absalom and Barclay was content to dwell with his own people and to die there. Although Bart's light did ask for his children to go Third thing, that is surprising.

Except for not so much in the context of the Bible. As a whole is that this godly woman is barren, didn't we just read and Exodus chapter 24? That one of the covenant blessings on the godly that comes from having God among them, is that they would not be barren.

But this woman has no sound. And so sometimes God, assigns infertility. Godly women like Sarah and like Hannah. And sometimes, of course, becomes in a miraculous way and assigns to them to bear children. So the the prophet tells her this time next year, you so embrace my embrace us on and that brings us to the next surprise.

She doesn't believe him. Now, that's actually something she has in common with Sarah. Is it when the Lord tells Abraham and Sarah laughs? And not only, does she not believe him. But then, when he asks her, why do you like, why did you laugh as anything too hard for youth way immediately upon being reminded who it is that she is speaking to to whom it.

Is that she is speaking. She argues with him? She says I did not laugh because she was afraid. Well, apparently not afraid enough. She wouldn't have argued with God and so as godly as this woman is and as contentency is with her own people, which is according to the Word of God, etc.

She did not believe the words of the man of God. He says, you shall embrace us on and we have two embracings of her son in the passage. Well, a third one is implied. When it says that according to the time that Elisha had told her, she bore us on for 17 and embraced his implied.

There about the two embraces. We see in the passage is when she holds her dying son on her knees until he dies. And then at the end of the passage, when Elijah says, pick up your son, but there's a surprise there too. So, we'll get there in a moment.

Next surprise is when the son of blessing. Right.

After verse 17, you're supposed to that get and they lived happily ever after the end, right? That's how stories are like that are supposed to end but the next thing is the sun's a toddler. I mean, at least young enough to sit on those mother's knees and he has a mortal mortal pain in his head, an exterprise is that she although apparently very distressed later in the passage is calm and composed and puts the Sun, not on his own bed.

But on the profits bed, at least you knows where there will be hope. But she doesn't tell her husband. She wants to deal with God first before she deals. With anyone else.

Didn't imagine after the entire incident. You know, how'd it go with with the boy? Now why did you go see the prophet? You said always well was going on. Oh, he was dead. And I was going to the prophet to see if God would resurrect him and he did, but you can seals it from her husband.

She tells him all it as well. She conceals it from Ghazi. She tells him it as well. Only when she gets to the mouthpiece of God, the holy man of God. Does she bare her soul? There's some wisdom in that that we only bear ourselves entirely before the Lord, but it is surprising.

Another thing that's surprising, is that, at this time in Israel, there were gatherings to the prophet. Every new moon in Sabbath, the feasts were being kept in the northern kingdom. With Elisha the man of God. Speaking the word of God, the husband thought, huh? That's strange, she wants to go to church.

And it isn't even a church day.

So there's actually implication here in the passage that for all of the quote-unquote miraculous signs Elisha is doing, there's an even greater miracle that we don't even hear about Sometimes. God does spiritual work that he doesn't tell us much about that. Maybe you have to study, scripture closely to read it about and then yeah, in our day, of course, You wouldn't hear about it at all.

It doesn't show up on social media or news reports, you know, hear about it in the prayer. Requests appraise reports in the churches but God is doing work. His grace is surprising as often invisible. The Lord Jesus says this. It works like 11. You don't see anything going on and yet God is working where you cannot see.

Then, so she gets to Elijah or sorry. Elijah, Apparently there's more to what she says than just verse 28 or at least he perceives that the child is dead from that. Perhaps she's told him a little bit more than that. Elisha expect time to be of the essence. He sends Ghazi, he tells him.

Don't stop on the way. And don't let anyone stop you on the way you go straight in. You put the staff on the, on the face of the boy. What's the next surprise? It doesn't work, isn't Elijah? Supposed to be the double portion of the spirit guy who is doing miracles and does a prophetic things like the bowl and the salt and Frederic actions, like the bowl on the salt or telling the previous woman, the widow with the two sons to, to collect the jars, and so forth.

Now he says layer staff on the face of the child. So what are we expecting in the context of Second Kings, Ghazi returns and says the child is alive. But guys, he returns and says the child has not awakened. So, the prophetic sign doesn't work and the next surprises.

The prophetic prayer doesn't work. He prays the the child is still not alive at the end of verse 33. He goes in, he lays on the child. This prophetic action, that combines the prayer. It's kind of a way of saying, please let this child be alive. As I'm alive, Please let your spirit.

Who is in me? Give life to this child and The child becomes warm. But he still doesn't live. So there's another surprise walks back and forth in the house goes up again. Child sneezes seven times and open his eye opens, his eyes. Guys, he calls the woman and says she comes.

It very tells, God has he called the woman? She comes in and he says, pick up your son in the final surprise, although it's not entirely surprising because we begin with the surprise for godliness. Her son is alive but she doesn't dive immediately to pick up her son. She falls on her face to worship God in the presence of his servant and presence of the word of God as embodied in his servant.

You see just as in her distress, her first recourse, reflex sort of been, it was to interact with God rather than men not, you know, making a big morning, not going out and, and screaming to her husband. The dreadful thing that had happened, but not spilling it to Gehazi.

But getting to the Word of God as embodied in Elijah. So also her first inclination, her ref first. Reflex. And her joy was not even an interact with her son, but to worship God. And so the grace of God is surprising. And when it shapes people, it makes them to be surprising the unconverted person.

The one who doesn't know, God, the one who doesn't have a vital relationship with God. Can't understand the person whose first desire whether in distress or enjoy, is to interact with God. Why? Because they're always thinking about what people will think and what they're going to tell people But if the Lord is the most important to you, if he is your life, Then we will always be thinking about what God thinks and we can't wait to tell him.

And what will we tell him? And how will we come before Him eagerness to do. So and so forth. And so this is a passage that is full of the surprisingness of God's grace and even the surprisingness of those and whom God graciously works. Let's spray our Father in heaven.

We thank you that you do not answer us according to our timing, but according to yours that you do not always answer us in the way that we ask, but always in the way that you intend your wisdom. And we ask of God that just as you are surprising to us because we cannot fathom you, your ways are higher than our ways and your thoughts, higher than our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth.

We pray that you would also do such a spiritual work in us. That we would be surprising. And what you have done in us, would be surprising to those who have not experienced it and are unable to connect with it. O Lord indeed. We pray that you would do such a working us that our future selves would be the sort of people who would be rather surprising to us right now.

Especially Lord, we ask that you would make us to be those who are patient with whatever providence you give us. But that in every sort of providence, you'd make the first reflex of our heart, to be unto you help us. O Lord, to behold you as greater than man so that you would be our primary focus in life, the SC things in Jesus name.

Amen.