

II Kings 4:18-37; Heb. 11:17-19; The Shunamite's Son Restored I. An Untimely Death II. A Delayed Resurrection

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we live in a world where good things do not last. Doesn't it seem like time flies when we are having fun, but drags on when we are doing something we do not enjoy.

That is one of the marks of living in a fallen world. Sometimes good things end too quickly or are taken away- and we are left asking the question why? Why did my loved one have to die? Why did I have to lose the job I enjoyed so well? Why did this or that thing have to be taken away? And although we will not always have an answer to these questions of why, it is important to know how to respond to them with faith! In other words, asking the question- why- does not mean that we have given up on God nor that we doubt His promises. Even as Job learned to say, the Lord gives and the Lord takes away- and yet I will bless the name of the LORD! So today we return to II Kings 4 as we continue to see the life and now death of the Shunamite's son. As we saw last week with Sarah, the Shunamite woman and Mary, the LORD is able to use miraculous means to bring forth a child. Today as we look at Isaac, the Shunamite's son and Jesus, we find that miraculous life is found after death! We consider this theme: Jesus Christ reveals His resurrection power in the raising of the Shunamite's son.

I. An Untimely Death

In our first point we find that this son of the promise- this boy born by miraculous means- suffers and untimely death. Now all death in a certain sense, is untimely. However, when this little boy dies, his death is particularly tragic for many reasons. First of all, his death is untimely and tragic because he is the child of the promise! He is not a child born by normal means; his birth was one of promise! A miraculous birth worked by God at the word of Elisha his servant! So what happens to this boy is a reflection of the prophet- Elisha- and the God of the Elisha as well! Does the LORD give this son only to take away? Does Elisha promise a child to this woman only to cruelly take the child away? It was for this very reason that the Shunamite woman said in v. 28- I told you not to deceive me! I was fine- I was

content before you came and promised this child to me. Now that you have given me this son, do you now take him away? The second reason that this child's death is untimely is because he was the only son- the child of the promise was the only heir to this woman and her husband was now an even older man! So there is little hope of another son being born as well. Thirdly, this child's death is untimely because he was a young boy. A period of time has passed by the time we get to v. 18- he is grown up in the sense that he is self sufficient- we would say he is potty trained and able to eat solid food. He is old enough to go out to the field with his father- but young enough to be carried by the servant in v. 19. So we can estimate his age around 5 to 8 years old. Note that this boy is not an old man- he has yet to live his life- and yet the cold dew of death has fallen on his brow. Losing a young son to death- such a sad and trying event to endure. So this young boy goes out to work the field with his aged father, and suffers a heat stroke, aneurism, or some other injury to his head that he makes it home and dies a few hours later. Alive and well in the morning, but dead by noon. So the mother takes her son and places him on Elisha's bed in their upper room. This son has been promised and provided by the LORD- at the word of Elisha- and thus this son's wellbeing is Elisha's responsibility. The only source of hope- the only possible solution will be found in going back to Elisha and His God! The son of the promise becomes the sick and now dead son- the joy of parenthood is turned to sorrow and mourning. As we find in v. 27- this woman is in bitter distress. To get at the heart of what she is going through- she is seen to be vexed. The word used here is Mara- meaning bitter. The same word that Naomi used to describe her situation when her husband and sons had died and she was left all alone. Call me Mara for I am bitter and empty. And this matter was hidden from all- except Him who could help. The father is not told- rather the father is told that everything is at peace- all is well- Shalom. The servant is not told- Gahazi is not informed. Even Elisha is not told- the Lord hides this matter from him as well in v. 27. But what is happening is this- the gift given is the gift taken away- to awaken the sense of need within the heart of this woman. The Shunamite did not think that she needed anything- so something was promised and

provided which was not even hoped for. Now that precious gift is taken away. To test her faith- to try her resolve and strengthen her dependence and trust in the LORD! As Job himself would learn, there is a purpose in this trial and a meaning to this hardship! Shall we accept blessings and not hardships from his hand? So the miraculous birth is followed by an untimely death- to open the door for a glorious resurrection! Faith produced followed by faith tested and tried- proved true! Even if this woman did not understand, she would still believe! Even as she utters the question- why- she still clings to the LORD- trusting all will be will- and she lays herself at the feet of the prophet! And like Jacob who held onto the angel before, she will not let go until she gets a blessing! But does the answer really come from Elisha? Is it Elisha who heals and gives life?

II. A Delayed Resurrection

As we come to our second point, we find the delayed resurrection. There is a strange series of events that take place- and what we find is that the resurrection hoped for does not come immediately. When Elisha acts in our passage, he is acting from a position of ignorance. I do not know and the LORD has hidden this from me. And when he acts, life is not immediately restored! First Elisha sends the staff by the hand of Gahazi in v. 31- but the child does not wake. The staff did not work and the child is still dead! More delay- more time goes by. Next Elisha appears in person in v. 34. He lays himself as a covering for this boy- hand to hand and eye to eye- and again- nothing happens! No life! So he walks back and forth in v. 35- pacing the floor- only to stretch out upon this lad again. It is almost as if Elisha is taking the place of this boy- identifying with the dead in order to make him alive- giving his warmth and life to the boy- but we know that He cannot. There is only one who truly can give life to others. And this time there is a change- and the boy sneezes and opens his eyes! But what we see through this whole process is this- Elisha is not really the one who gives this child his life! No, the power for the resurrection is found in v. 33- Elisha prayed the LORD. And as he stretched himself over the boy, he was performing a visible picture of prayer. Prostrating himself over the boy- overshadowing the boy- and

the Spirit heard the woman and Elisha's prayer- and the Spirit of the LORD gave life to this lad again! So the delay is instructive- a lot of time has passed from v. 20 until we get to v. 35. And it was not an immediate resurrection. Many different points and actions connected to it. Why? Why this delay? Well, we could ask, why did Jesus wait 4 days before coming to raise Lazarus? Why not immediately come- or why not stop Lazarus from dying in the first place in John 11? Well, the delay was to test the faith of His followers as well as to magnify the glory of the One who has power over the grave! The delay in our passage magnifies the power of the LORD who has the power to save and raise the dead! We find the same thing in many of the miracles the Jesus performed- He would identify with the sick- tough the unclean- put his fingers in the ears and on the tongues of those in need. But what Elisha can only pray for Jesus actually does! Lets read a few verses from Luke 7. (Luke 7:11-17). Now you may find interesting that the city of Nain- where this miracle took place in Luke 7- is on the other side of the hill from the village of Shunem. We are in virtually the exact same place in Galilee! Where Elisha prays for and the LORD raises the Shunamites son- and where Jesus simply touches the casket and the boy is raised- being returned to his amazed mother! So, turning our attention back to II Kings 4- the boy is raised and returned to his mother- stated as a matter of fact- and she takes her resurrected son and leaves the upper room. So the resurrection that Elisha prays for is provided by Jesus's touch. Where Elisha was not able to raise the boy from a distance, all the dead will be raised at Jesus very word.

But I want to point out one more aspect before we conclude, as I said last week, we see here picture of both Isaac and Jesus in this narrative! Not only is Jesus able to save and raise the dead, He Himself was dead and by His own power raised Himself from the dead. In pointing back to Isaac, as we read in Heb. 11, Abraham figuratively took his son back from the grave. Although not literally killed, Abraham believed that God could and would raise his son because his son was the child of the promise. So in Gen. 22, Abraham already believed in the power of God to raise the dead- and figuratively he did because the angel stopped his hand and provided a ram as a substitute. But what happened figuratively

in Gen. 22 happened literally in II Kings 4- the Shunamite's son was really dead and was really brought back to life by the power of the LORD. In a similar way, Jesus who is the child of the promise- really was dead. Jesus not only has the power to raise the dead as we read, He Himself died and was buried- remaining in the grave 3 days. There was a delay before the resurrection, to prove that He was really dead! But on the 3rd day, by His power and according to the promise, He rose from the dead! He laid down His life, and He took it up again! It is His power over the grave that gives us our hope and comfort today! Since He lives, we will one day live with Him! When He calls, the dead will rise! For the Life He lives, we will live with Him! Praise God for Jesus power over the grave!

To conclude, true faith believes in the goodness and power of God, even when we are in times of great trial and distress! Faith believes in the promises of God, even when we do not see! What is perhaps the greatest test to our faith is the presence of death! When loved ones are carried away from us. At times like this we need to remember who Jesus is, what He has done and what He has promised to do! Jesus has raised the dead; He himself has been raised from the dead never to die again- and those who believe in Him will one day be raised to eternal life by His power and Spirit! As we saw today, Jesus Christ reveals His resurrection power in the raising of the Shunamite's son. So our prayers for and need for life and resurrection will be answered one day- when Jesus Christ comes back and call us all to stand before Him! On that day we will bow before Him, and our hearts will be filled with great joy as we declare- a great prophet has come and God has visited His people!