

II Kings 8:1-6; Mt. 19:27-30; What is Lost will be Restored I. The Woman who Sojourns II. The Gracious Evidence III. The Restoration of Fortunes

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, have you ever had to lose or give up something as a part of your Christian life? Have you ever had to say “no” to something or someone because you were a follower of Christ? I imagine that most of us have had to count the cost- to sacrifice things that we wanted in order to live the Christian life consistently. Like the Christian parents who say no to a new car or the extravagant vacation in order to pay for Christian Education. Or the husband who says “no” to the raise that would mean more money- but less time with the family. Being a Christian means that we have to count the cost- to be willing to sacrifice our own desires and say no to our wants in order to faithfully follow Christ. Sometimes, being a Christian is costly! But the following question also needs to be answered- does God see and reward that sacrifice? Does He reward obedience that we offer as a part of our faith and gratitude for salvation? If God does reward His people- how and when? Well, today as we return to II Kings we find a familiar character- the Shunamite woman. And in the dramatic reversal of her fortunes, we find a lesson about the generosity of our Gracious God! We consider this theme: Jesus Christ restores the fortunes of those who are ending their sojourn.

I. The Woman who Sojourns

In our first point we are reintroduced to the Shunamite woman who we first met back in chapter 4. This Shunamite woman came from wealth- she and her husband were one of the leading couples of Shunem. They had built a room for Elisha and they provided for his earthly needs whenever he was in town. She had everything she could want- she was at ease living among her own people as she would say. However, the LORD knows the desires of her heart. To repay her for her kindness, the LORD had instructed Elisha to give this couple the promise of a child. So this couple goes from childless- to receiving a boy from the LORD’S hand. However, a few years later this little boy dies. And by the hand of Elisha, this child is restored to life. Now Elisha’s servant had witnessed this- and he was now telling the King of Israel all about it- when this woman walks in the door in v. 5. So this woman went from childless- to giving birth to a child- to having that child die- only to have that child restored again. There is a dramatic reversal and restoration at play here. But now, this Shunamite woman has

appeared before the king because she has experienced another great loss. Earlier Elisha had told this woman to flee the land- God was going to bring a severe famine upon the land- and the Northern Tribes of Israel endured 7 years of famine as we have seen. But this Shunamite, her husband and son had found shelter in the land of the Philistines. Kind of like David did when he was being hunted by King Saul. Imagine being told- your native land is going to have nothing for 7 years. It would be like me telling you- I want you to walk away from everything. Don't sell it- just walk away! Leave everything you have and go to Mexico. Live in Mexico for 7 years- then you can come back! That would take some faith to obey! But now, after obeying the warning of Elisha, this family comes back and their home and lands have been seized by others. Someone else is living in their house and farming their land! As you can see- sometimes obedience leads to great loss! This is a test of faith- to obey God's word and then bear the consequences of that obedience! No one ever said that the life of a Christian is supposed to be easy- on the other hand- obedience is hard. Sometimes you lose out on money - the choice to prioritize your faith, family and church does not often bring immediate, financial reward. Rather, supporting ministries and tithing means financial loss. As this woman found out- faithfulness costs something! Once she had a home and she rejoiced in that home! Now, coming back, she had no home and no land. For an Israel- your home and your land were your link to the covenant and the blessings of God! There is an echo of Naomi here as well- remember that Naomi went to the Land of Moab because of a famine in the book of Ruth and returned home empty. With nothing as she put it. Who would be this Shunamite woman's kinsman redeemer? Who would defend her cause and return that which was lost? How would you feel when returning home to find someone else living in your house- reaping from your fields! I remember back in seminary where we would serve an internship for a few months and then return home. It was so nice to be back- right? But imagine if someone else had moved in while you were gone! Well, this woman is goes straight to the king for justice!

II. The Gracious Evidence

Returning to our passage, we find Elisha's servant, Gahazi, is in the presence of Jehoram the King of Israel. Now remember that Gahazi has leprosy- he was stricken with this skin disease because he sought gifts from Naaman

after Naaman was healed from this disease. Now why is Gahazi called into the presence of the king? To tell the king all that Elisha has done. Gahazi is called to preach- basically- acting like a mouthpiece or messenger who tells of all that God had done by the hand of Elisha. Was the king struck by his conscience? Did he repent of his anger at the LORD and Elisha during the siege at the hand of Syria? Was he marveling at the plenty and peace God provided when Syria ran away? Why is Gahazi here and not Elisha? We do not know. But for whatever reason, the king wants to know about lesser known works of Elisha. We also note that this Shunamite's husband is not present. Although this woman and her husband are in chapter 4- he is strikingly absent in chapter 8. It is likely that he died during the past 7 years- making this woman's plight all the more desperate! Remember, that the king had already seen the LORD work through Elisha in the deliverance from the Syrian army. But these two men are discussing all that Elisha has done. One particular work is being retold- when Elisha granted a child and restored this child again to life. Now Gahazi had a front row seat- he has seen it all take place back in chapter 4. But to make the matter all the more certain, when Gahazi tells of this miracle who should walk through the door but this very Shunamite woman! If you don't believe me, ask her! And here is her son- that very child now stands before you! This is a gracious provision- as the work of God by the hand of Elisha is made known. Specific proof is granted in this arrival of this mother and son. And the King is moved by it- He is forced to see the power of God and that Elisha is truly His servant! In God's providence, the necessary evidence to prove the words of Gahazi walk through the door! Talk about timing! Only God could do that- after being gone for 7 years- appoint this woman and her child to show up right when they were being discussed! And when the king hears of Elisha's work and sees the proof in this mother and child- He is forced to acknowledge- only God could do something like that! And as we move into our last point, we find that because of this woman's connection to Elisha that her land and home will be restored. In other words, it was the reputation of Elisha- this woman's connection to him- that secures the resolution of the matter. In this way, Elisha becomes a kinsman redeemer even though he is not physically present. The very remembrance of his works is enough to move this king to act. This is surprising- because this is not a righteous, Godly king! No, Jehoram was not a model of integrity. Normally he would have acted like King Ahab of old- taking homes and lands for himself. But it is because of this

woman's connection to Elisha that the king's hand is forced! As Prov. 21 says, the heart of the king is in the hand of God- He can turn it wherever He wills. So we have a rare occurrence- a woman receives justice from a wicked king because of her connection to the prophet of God!

III. The Restoration of Fortunes

So the king upon hearing of what Elisha had done for her moves to make amends in v. 6. Restore to her what was taken. These 6 verses of our text are all about restoration. This word- restore- is found 4 times. God is in the business of restoring- bringing back what was lost- restoring man to a place of blessing- restoring fellowship- restoring creation! He brings back and recovers- that is what we are to see about our God this evening! Our God delights in restoration- reconciliation! Making good what was once bad and broken! So this wicked King, Jehoram, declares that this woman's possessions are to be restored. But did you catch scope of this restoration. All her land, her home and all lost income. So this woman who left her home and lands in obedience does literally receive a precious reward! Not only is her house and land restored, even the lost wages were returned in v. 6. Whatever the land would have produced during the past 7 years is given to her! We have to remember that our God is not a begrudging giver! He is the God of the Jubilee! The God who celebrates restoration- freedom- recovery! The 7 year liberty and restoration as found in Dt. 15- so this woman has come back at a fitting time as well. And in this restoration, we find a spiritual truth that endures. God sees and He rewards obedience in His children! As Mt. 10 puts it, whoever gives a cup of cold water to a little one in my name will be blessed. If you receive a prophet, you will receive a prophet's rewards! To all who show kindness to a child of God because they are a child of God will in no way lose his reward! So this woman who graciously provided for Elisha all those years ago is again remembered and her work rewarded! To be clear, this passage is not teaching us that salvation is by works- that if we obey we will earn our way into heaven. But it is true that God promises blessings- to reward those who obey in faith! As we read in our passage from Mt. 19:29- if you leave your home or lands for my sake, you will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life! We don't like to talk about rewards because we are careful to protect the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Rightly

so! However, the doctrine of rewards is also biblical- we do good works knowing that they will be rewarded in this life and in the next. As HC LD 24 makes clear- our good works do not merit anything- but God does promise to reward them as gifts of His grace! So this woman is rewarded 100 fold! There is comfort in this truth- and encouragement to be sure! If you have given up anything- said no to anything- sacrificed anything in order to follow after Christ and obey His commands- you are not really going to miss out are you? Whatever you give up will be seen and rewarded if you chose to obey with a heart of faith! This woman obeyed Elisha and it cost her deeply- it was hard but she obeyed! Now we see that God rewarded her with a gracious restoration! So if you refuse to give up your principles- if you sacrificially give and support Christian ministries- you will receive back greater than you gave! These rewards are not usually seen in this life- but they will certainly be seen in the life to come! As our reading said in Mt. 19- you will inherit eternal life! So mansions in glory- a home in heaven- an inheritance and crowns that never fade nor dimmish! The promise of glory and true riches in the life to come is a blessed consolation for God's people! This is not the prosperity gospel- this is a promise of God! We do not give in order to get back the exact same things in this life- rather we give up the temporary and the passing riches of this life because God has promised us true and lasting riches in the life to come! As I Peter 1:4 says, we are born again in Christ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you. These are the riches that we are promised and the reward that we will receive in Jesus Christ!

To conclude, our passage reveals the loving care of our God and the restoration that He promises His people! To give up the earthly and passing treasures is an act of faith- as we entrust them to our Father who has promised to return riches to us with interest! As Heb. 10:36 illustrates, the saints joyfully accepted the plundering of their property because they knew that they had a better possession and an abiding one! As our theme states: Jesus Christ restores the fortunes of those who are ending their sojourn. Just as this Shunamite woman had her fortunes restored when her sojourning was over, we too will have our fortunes restored when our sojourning is over! When we leave this world and return to the promised land, the righteous King will see to it that our inheritance is given! Truly He restores our souls! As the kinsman redeemer in the Book of Ruth did- he will restore our life and comfort us in our old age!