

A reading from 2 Kings (2 Kings 4:8-37) – week 6- July 26th

⁸ One day Elisha passed through Shunem. A leading lady of the town talked him into stopping for a meal. And then it became his custom: Whenever he passed through, he stopped by for a meal.

⁹⁻¹⁰ “I’m certain,” said the woman to her husband, “that this man who stops by with us all the time is a holy man of God. Why don’t we add on a small room upstairs and furnish it with a bed and desk, chair and lamp, so that when he comes by he can stay with us?”

¹¹ And so it happened that the next time Elisha came by he went to the room and lay down for a nap.

¹² Then he said to his servant Gehazi, “Tell the Shunammite woman I want to see her.” He called her and she came to him.

¹³ Through Gehazi Elisha said, “You’ve gone far beyond the call of duty in taking care of us; what can we do for you? Do you have a request we can bring to the king or to the commander of the army?”

She replied, “Nothing. I’m secure and satisfied in my family.”

¹⁴ Elisha conferred with Gehazi: “There’s got to be something we can do for her. But what?”

Gehazi said, “Well, she has no son, and her husband is an old man.”

¹⁵ “Call her in,” said Elisha. He called her and she stood at the open door.

¹⁶ Elisha said to her, “This time next year you’re going to be nursing an infant son.”

“O my master, O Holy Man,” she said, “don’t play games with me, teasing me with such fantasies!”

¹⁷ The woman conceived. A year later, just as Elisha had said, she had a son.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ The child grew up. One day he went to his father, who was working with the harvest hands, complaining, “My head, my head!”

His father ordered a servant, “Carry him to his mother.”

²⁰The servant took him in his arms and carried him to his mother. He lay on her lap until noon and died.

²¹She took him up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut him in alone, and left.

²²She then called her husband, “Get me a servant and a donkey so I can go to the Holy Man; I’ll be back as soon as I can.”

²³“But why today? This isn’t a holy day—it’s neither New Moon nor Sabbath.”

She said, “Don’t ask questions; I need to go right now. Trust me.”

²⁴⁻²⁵She went ahead and saddled the donkey, ordering her servant, “Take the lead—and go as fast as you can; I’ll tell you if you’re going too fast.” And so off she went. She came to the Holy Man at Mount Carmel.

²⁵⁻²⁶The Holy Man, spotting her while she was still a long way off, said to his servant Gehazi, “Look out there; why, it’s the Shunammite woman! Quickly now. Ask her, ‘Is something wrong? Are you all right? Your husband? Your child?’”

She said, “Everything’s fine.”

²⁷But when she reached the Holy Man at the mountain, she threw herself at his feet and held tightly to him.

Gehazi came up to pull her away, but the Holy Man said, “Leave her alone—can’t you see that she’s in distress? But God hasn’t let me in on why; I’m completely in the dark.”

²⁸Then she spoke up: “Did I ask for a son, master? Didn’t I tell you, ‘Don’t tease me with false hopes?’”

²⁹He ordered Gehazi, “Don’t lose a minute—grab my staff and run as fast as you can. If you meet anyone, don’t even take time to greet him, and if anyone greets you, don’t even answer. Lay my staff across the boy’s face.”

³⁰The boy’s mother said, “As sure as God lives and you live, you’re not leaving me behind.” And so Gehazi let her take the lead, and followed behind.

³¹ But Gehazi arrived first and laid the staff across the boy's face. But there was no sound—no sign of life. Gehazi went back to meet Elisha and said, "The boy hasn't stirred."

³²⁻³⁵ Elisha entered the house and found the boy stretched out on the bed dead. He went into the room and locked the door—just the two of them in the room—and prayed to God. He then got into bed with the boy and covered him with his body, mouth on mouth, eyes on eyes, hands on hands. As he was stretched out over him like that, the boy's body became warm. Elisha got up and paced back and forth in the room. Then he went back and stretched himself upon the boy again. The boy started sneezing—seven times he sneezed!—and opened his eyes.

³⁶ He called Gehazi and said, "Get the Shunammite woman in here!" He called her and she came in.

Elisha said, "Embrace your son!"

³⁷ She fell at Elisha's feet, face to the ground in reverent awe. Then she embraced her son and went out with him.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**