

“Graciousness has its Benefits”
2 Kings 8:1-6
(Preached at Trinity, April 3, 2022)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In this text we are reintroduced to a figure we met in **Chapter 4**.
Elisha had moved into Shunem, a small village of the tribe of Issachar about 15 miles from the Sea of Galilee. As Elisha traveled about, he often passed by the home of a particular woman and her husband.
 - A. She remains nameless – only referred to as the Shunammite.
She is described as being prominent – the word means “great.” Her family was probably wealthy and she was very hospitable. She was considerably younger than her husband. In fact, he is described in **Verse 14** as being “old.”
 - B. Elisha often passed through this village. Perhaps there was a circuit where he would travel and preaching and teaching the Word of God. This woman would sit and carefully listen to his words.
 - C. As Elisha passed by this woman’s house, she always demonstrated great hospitality. In time, the woman convinced her husband to prepare him a furnished upper room where he could stay whenever he traveled near their home.
2. Elisha was thankful for her graciousness and wanted to repay her. He obviously had connections. He could go to the king or to the general and lift up her name for commendation. She refused any form of repayment, saying she had everything she needed among her own people. In other words, her good works were not offered with any expectation of reward.
2 Kings 4:8-13
3. Now we come to **Chapter 8**
They were at the beginning a severe famine, and once again Elisha comes to the aid of this Shunammite woman. Notice, the famine was from the hand of God. Israel continued unrepentant in their sin and God’s judgment was upon them.
Knowing the severity of the situation, Elisha tells her,
2 Kings 8:1 NAU - "Arise and go with your household, and sojourn wherever you can sojourn; for the LORD has called for a famine, and it will even come on the land for seven years."
4. There is a probability that her husband has died by this time leaving her as a widow. She listened to the words of Elisha and left her home and dwelt among the Philistines for seven years. While she was gone her house and property fell into the hands of king. When she returned she went before the king to appeal for the return of her land. It shows the remarkable prophetic insight of Elisha who years before offered to go before the king on her behalf.

5. The fame of Elisha was known far and wide. The king, presumably Jehoram, called for Gehazi. But wasn't Gehazi a leper?
 - a. Some hold that the accounts in these chapters are not necessarily in chronological order. The events of **Chapter 5** may have occurred after this passage which means Gehazi may not yet be a leper. The king wants Gehazi to recount the great deeds of Elisha.
 - b. Or it could be that Gehazi was one of the lepers sitting at the gate when the Syrians fled the camp. The king is interested if Elisha had something to do with the sudden end of the siege.
 - c. As he was telling the king of the miracle of restoring to life the son of a Shunammite woman she arrived to make her plea for her lands. You can almost hear the Gehazi speaking, "And here she is, and this is the boy raised to life!"
 - d. The perfect timing of the events reminds us of God's sovereign dominion over all things. There are no chance meetings in the sovereign purposes of God.
 6. The king immediately orders that not only her land and home be restored but also seven years of missed harvests.
 7. The woman once again was repaid for her graciousness.
- I. First of all, what do we mean by graciousness?
 - A. It is a quality of demonstrating grace
 1. The dictionary definition describes it: "the quality or state of being benevolent, courteous, and kind:"
 2. It is tied to the word grace. Grace is giving or receiving without regard to the worthiness of the recipient. We often define it as "Unmerited favor." The highest demonstration of grace is God's salvation of the elect.
 3. Graciousness also is demonstrated through acts of benevolence and kindness regardless of the actions of others.
 4. Graciousness leads to forgiveness, to kindness, to longsuffering and forbearance. It prevents a person from reacting against the actions of others—from seeking revenge or retaliation. Our words and actions are often designed to inflict pain. The gracious person is willing to overlook the faults of others.
 5. Graciousness gives regard to the feelings and needs of others. It is the true expression of the golden rule – to treat others as we would desire to be treated.
 - B. As an act of grace. it does not expect a return
 1. It isn't graciousness if we show kindness with an expectation of some form of reciprocation. When you say you're sorry, are you expecting some form of response?
 2. This Shunammite woman gladly showed Elisha hospitality when he passed by her house in his travels. When she and her husband built him a private room, she wasn't expecting anything in return.

3. When Elisha asked her specifically what he might do for her as a show of appreciation for her kindness she replied,
2 Kings 4:13 NAU - "Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the army?" And she answered, "I live among my own people."
 Her words were basically, "I have all that I need."
 She truly showed graciousness without any thought of receiving anything in return.

II. God was not unmindful of her acts of kindness

- A. The New Testament often teaches a paradigm of sowing and reaping
Galatians 6:9-10 NAU - "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. ¹⁰ So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."
 1. The Shunammite woman's actions seem to follow closely the words of Christ.
Matthew 10:41-42 NAU - "He who receives a prophet in *the* name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴² "And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."
 2. The writer of Hebrews maintains this principle
Hebrews 6:10 NAU - "For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints."
 3. We must not see this in a mechanical sense. Sometimes gracious acts of kindness seem go unnoticed.
 But God's ways are not our ways and He is working in the lives of His people in ways they are often unaware of.
 4. And we must not consider these things from the heart of a hireling—those who labor in order to receive their wages.
- B. Consider the life of this Shunammite woman
 1. She told Elisha she needed nothing. Gehazi reminded Elisha she was without child and so Elisha announced she would be with child.
2 Kings 4:16-17 NAU - "At this season next year you will embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant." ¹⁷ The woman conceived and bore a son at that season the next year, as Elisha had said to her."
 2. Then the child died. God's people are not without adversity. But God blessed her in giving the child back to her.
2 Kings 4:36-37 NAU - "He called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son." ³⁷ Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground, and she took up her son and went out."

3. Now a severe famine was about to descend upon the land. Elisha was sent to warn her to flee to another land. It was God's kindness to this faithful woman.
4. After seven years she returns to find her house and land has been seized. God moves the king to restore all and more to her.

III. How are we to apply this to our lives?

- A. The motivation of the Shunammite was the honor of God
 1. She saw that Elisha was a holy man of God. She wanted to honor God by honoring His servant.
2 Kings 4:9 NAU - "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually."
 2. This is how she lived her life. It was a life focused on God's holiness. Her actions had no other motivation.
 3. Jesus told the parable of the sheep and goats.
 - a. When the sheep stood before Him and he commended them for graciously serving Him by serving others they all in one accord said, "When."
Matthew 25:37-40 NAU - "Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? ³⁸ 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ "The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.'"
 - b. The point is they demonstrated graciousness towards those in need without making it some religious act to be recognized. It was just how they lived.
 - c. The wicked also answered, "When." But for them it was the attitude, "If we had known it was you we might have offered our help." It wasn't in their heart to love and serve others.
- B. Our desire must be to increase in graciousness to God's glory
 1. The opposite of graciousness is to be cynical, critical, bitter, mean-spirited, unforgiving, selfish. It is the heart of a lost person.
2 Timothy 3:2-4 NAU - "For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,"
 2. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit works within us,
Galatians 5:22-23 NAU - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

- a. The Holy Spirit's presence in the life of the believer results in the beauty of holiness and the excellence of the character of Christ. Of course, the Christian can hinder the gracious working of the Holy Spirit by careless and worldly living. This is why Paul states emphatically,
Galatians 5:16 NAU - "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."
Galatians 5:25 NAU - "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."
- b. Paul says, "against such things there is no law."
 The Law commands these things but it cannot produce them. Martin Luther said, "The righteous has no need of any law to admonish or to constrain him; without the constraint of the law, he willingly does those things which the law requires."¹
- c. The life lived in Christ is the life of freedom. The lost man may live according to a set of rules and regulations. The believer simply lives in Christ.
 F.F. Bruce: "The Law may prescribe certain forms of conduct and prohibit others, but love, joy, peace cannot be legally enforced. A vine does not produce grapes by an act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine's own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God's, but it is the fruit of that divine nature which God gives us as the result of what he has done in and by Christ."²

Conclusion:

1. May God grant us the grace of graciousness. Of showing kindness and generosity to others, even when they are undeserving.
2. Know of a certainty, God is not unmindful of your kindness.
3. There is one more important truth to be gleaned from this passage. Israel was under judgment and God came in His mercy and warned this gracious woman of faith to flee. She heeded the warning and was saved.
 - a. Later we read another warning from the prophet Habakkuk.
Habakkuk 2:2-4 NAU - "Then the LORD answered me and said, "Record the vision And inscribe *it* on tablets, That the one who reads it may run. ³ "For the vision is yet for the appointed time; It hastens toward the goal and it will not fail. Though it tarries, wait for it; For it will certainly come, it will not delay. ⁴ "Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him; But the righteous will live by his faith."
 - b. He was ordered to nail the warning in the Temple court so that all the faithful might read it and flee.

¹ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1988), 381.

² F. F. Bruce, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary, the Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 255.

- c. The same occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 ad.
Matthew 24:15-16 NAU - "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), ¹⁶ then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains."
Christians heeded the warning and fled from the devastation.
- d. The Gospel warns of the coming judgment. All who heed it and flee to Christ will be saved.