

Sermon by Terry Trivette
II Kings 4:8-21, 25-28
“When a Mother Trusts the Father”

1. THE GIFT THAT BLESSED HER HOME
 - A. God was glorified by this woman
 - B. God was gracious to this woman
2. THE GREIF THAT BROKE HER HEART
 - A. How surprising this crisis
 - B. How sad this crisis
3. THE GOD THAT BROUGHT HER HOPE
 - A. Her actions
 - B. Her assurance

1. Monica had three children. Her son, in particular, caused her no shortage of grief and worry. Though he received the finest education, and became a renowned scholar and teacher, he did not believe in God, and he lived a wild and wicked life. For ten years, Monica’s hedonistic son lived with a mistress, fathered an illegitimate child, and practiced every vice imaginable.

2. Though her son seemed to grow more wicked with each passing year of his life, Monica knew the Lord, and she prayed earnestly and continually that her son would be saved, and leave his sinful life behind.

3. After years of earnest prayer, Monica’s son finally and fully came to faith in Jesus Christ. Instantly his life was changed, and the once wicked and wayward son became a bishop and one of the most influential figures in church history. We know him as Saint Augustine.

4. Augustine’s theology and ministry still influence the church to this day, some 1600 years after his death. Behind his spiritual legacy are the prayers of his mother.

5. Monica’s story is just one of a countless number of mothers who could testify to the power of faith and prayer on behalf of their children. Millions of prodigal sons and daughters have come to Christ because of a mother who prayed for their souls.

6. In II Kings 4, we find a fascinating story that reminds us of the power of a mother who trusts the Father for the sake of her children. A woman from a town called Shunem ministered to the prophet Elisha, and in reward for her kindness, the Lord blessed her with a son.

7. When her only son died, she believed God for a miracle, and saw her son raised from the dead and restored to her. Her story speaks to those mothers today whose children may be spiritually dead, or away from the Lord.

8. As long as a mother trusts the heavenly Father, no child is too far to be reached, or too spiritually dead to be raised to new life in Christ. This mother in II Kings inspires all mothers to never give up on their children.

9. As we examine this text, there are three aspects of this mother's story that speak to us today. First of all, notice with me:

I. THE GIFT THAT BLESSED HER HOME

1. While the woman in II Kings 4 speaks to us as a mother, that was not always the case in her life. In verse 14, Elisha's servant says, "*Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.*"

2. For many years, this woman whom the Bible calls a "great" woman was childless. For whatever reason, her and her husband had been unable to conceive, and by the time we meet them, they seem to be past the age of child-bearing.

3. Though she no doubt thought she would never be a mother, one day the man of God gave her a promise. In verse 16, Elisha said, "*About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son...*"

4. With that word from God, this great woman's life became that much greater through the gift of a son she thought she would never have. As we consider this unlikely mother, we are struck by a couple of things. We see that:

A. God was glorified by this woman

1. The old evangelist, from Cartersville, GA, Sam Jones, once told about a women's meeting in which they discussed how old a child should be before their mother begins training them in the things of the Lord.

2. One woman suggested that a mother should begin to spiritually train her children at the age of 6. Another thought that would be too long to wait, and she suggested the age of 4.

3. A third mother spoke up and said, "We must begin to train them in the paths of righteousness from the day we begin to train them to walk."

4. Finally, one sainted old mother spoke up and said, "I'll tell you when to start: begin twenty years before the birth of the child, with his mother."ⁱ

5. When we look at this mother in II Kings 4, we find that long before she had the glow of pregnancy, she had a testimony of godliness. The text tells of how she had served the Prophet Elisha, even building a little room for him to stay in when he visited.

6. This dear lady serves to remind us of the power of a woman who loves and serves the Lord. A truly great woman is a truly godly woman, whose beauty has less to do with her make up and more to do with her Master.

7. Proverbs 31:30 says, *“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”* In an age where physical beauty is prized above all else, this woman in II Kings speaks to us of the eternal value of a lady who will glorify God.

8. Notice something else about this woman and the gift that blessed her home. Notice not only that God was glorified by this woman, but notice also further that:

B. God was gracious to this woman

1. After all the hospitality and kindness that this woman had shown to the man of God, the day came in which the prophet wanted to do something to show his gratitude.

2. In verse 13, Elisha spoke to the woman and said, *“Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee?”*

3. The woman was content with what she had, and did not ask for anything. However, when the prophet realized that she had no children, he said to her in verse 16, *“About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son.”*

4. Verse 17 tells us that just as the man of God had said, the woman gave birth to a little boy. Though she did not ask for it, the Lord was gracious to her, and blessed her home with the gift of a child.

5. I imagine that every night, when she tucked that little boy into bed, she knelt down by his side and prayed and thanked God for his life. Every time she heard his little feet running through the house, she praised the Lord for that sound that for so many years was never heard in her home.

6. If there was ever a doting mother, it was this one. If there was ever a mother who saw her child as a gracious gift from God, it was this one.

7. The late Dr. Adrian Rogers once said, *“Some parents say that their kids are angels. You will find that as their legs grown longer, their wings grow shorter.”*ⁱⁱⁱ

8. Though the halo of an infant quickly fades into the headache of a toddler, and the hardship of a teenager, we must never forget that all children are gifts from God. Each one is a token of His grace!

9. As we look on in this text, we find another chapter in this mother's story. We see not only *the gift that blessed her home*, but notice also secondly:

II. THE GREIF THAT BROKE HER HEART

1. The home of this lady had been blessed with the birth a child, and as the story continues, we find that a tragic day came in which her heart was broken by the death of that same child.

2. The boy grew to the age that he was able to help his father in the field. One day, while in the field, the boy was struck with some sort of illness. Verse 19 says, *“And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.”*

3. Verse 20 says, *“And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.”* Only those who have experienced the horror of losing a child can truly relate to the agony contained in that verse.

4. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which many mothers, whose children are still alive, can relate somewhat to this mother's story. You see, there are many mothers whose children are physically alive, but they are spiritually dead.

5. Right now, there are mothers who live each day with a broken heart over a son or daughter that is lost, away from God, and spiritually lifeless. While this is a different type of deadness, it is nonetheless heart-wrenching and painful.

6. Notice a couple of things about this woman's grief that is true of mothers whose children are away from God. First of all, think of:

A. How surprising this crisis

1. When this mother in II Kings sent her son out that morning with his father, it never occurred to her that by that night her son would be dead.

2. That morning she watched him through the kitchen window as he bounded out through the yard, and she once again thanked God for his life, with no idea that his life would end before the morning had passed. She never expected such a crisis in the life of her family.

3. Those who raise their children in church, and try to point them to Christ, never dream their children will turn away from the faith. It is hard to imagine their children will ignore the things of God and abandon the house of God.

4. The reasons why children raised in church turn away from the faith may be many, but in most cases, their parents never dreamed their kids would one day walk away from the Lord.

5. Probably my favorite author is the Scottish preacher of the previous generation, J. Sidlow Baxter. In his biography, the story is told of his only daughter, Miriam.

6. Miriam was raised in church, and was loved deeply by her parents. As she grew up, however, she eventually drifted from church, and even out of the life of her parents. For many years, Baxter had little or no contact with his daughter.

7. After his death, a poem was found among his personal things. It was entitled *Missing*. The great preacher wrote these words for his wayward daughter:

*Each little toy you loved so much,
Is begging for your baby touch;
 In every nook and corner you are missing;
Your cradle in the nursery,
Your mother's arms your daddy's knee,
 In every nook and corner you are missing...*

The poem continues:

*The dawn still finds the morning sun,
But in this heart, my little one,
 In every nook and corner you are missing.ⁱⁱⁱ*

8. No Christian parent ever expects that their child that will ever stray from the Lord, and only the Lord knows the heartache it can cause when it happens. That leads me to something else with regard to the grief that broke this woman's heart:

9. Notice not only how surprising this crisis, but notice also:

B. How sad this crisis

1. In II Kings 4, the heart of this dear woman was crushed as she held the lifeless body of a son she thought she would never have, and never dreamed she might have to bury.

2. Though the text records nothing of her emotions, can we not feel in our own hearts the pain and heartache she must have experienced? That morning, her family was happy and whole, but by noon, the greatest blessing of her life had become her greatest burden.

3. Is that not how it is with our children? Because our children hold such a deep and special place in our hearts, they can most easily break them when they stray and rebel.

4. Oh, if you are a son or a daughter who is away from Christ, out of church, and living in sin, you cannot know the pain and the sadness you bring to your parents.

5. Proverbs 10:1 says, *“A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.”* Proverbs 17:25 says, *“A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.”*

6. Even more than the heartache a lost son or daughter brings to their parents, is the heartache they bring to the Lord! As deep as a mother’s love is for her children, the love of God is fathoms deeper, and His heart is broken when a child is lost.

7. Every mother whose saddened heart has pleaded to God for her children has prayed to the One who cares for her child even more than she does. The broken heart of a mother is matched only by the broken heart of the Lord Jesus, who came to seek and save the lost children of Adam.

8. Thankfully, this story does not end with a broken-hearted mother grieving over the grave of her only son. As we read on in this text, we see not only *the gift that blessed her home*, and *the grief that broke her heart*, but we see also thirdly:

II. THE GOD WHO BROUGHT HER HOPE

1. How this woman responded to the death of her son is both startling and inspiring. Rather than resigning herself to the fact that her son was lost forever, she reached out to God in hopes of restoring her son.

2. In so doing, this mother speaks to all mothers and teaches them that when your child cannot or will not go to God themselves, you can go to God for them.

3. This woman’s faith was unusual and unshakable. When others would have been planning a memorial, she was believing God for a miracle!

4. Have you given up hope for that son or daughter who seems dead spiritually? Let this woman remind you that your hope does not rest in any signs of life you may or may not see in your child. Your hope rests in a God who has the power to raise the dead.

5. Notice a couple of things about this woman’s determined faith in God. Notice first of all:

A. Her actions

1. Look again at the text, and notice what this woman did when she realized her son was dead. Verse 21 says, “*And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out.*”

2. Verse 25 says, “*So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel...*” Now look at verse 27. It says, “*And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet...*”

3. I suggest to you that this mother’s actions are instructive for that mother whose child seems spiritually dead. Notice her *insistence*. Rather than letting go, and putting her son in a grave, she carried him and laid him on the prophet’s bed.

4. This woman insisted upon going to God before giving up. She may have to bury her son, but she was not going to do that until she had visited the man of God.

5. Notice also her *intercession*. She left her boy on the bed, and she immediately left for Mount Carmel to see the man of God. She was determined to intercede with him on behalf of her son before she gave up hope.

6. Dear mother, no matter how far gone your child may seem, do not give up hope for them yet. Lay them at the feet of Jesus, and then intercede for them!

7. Go to God on their behalf, and plead with Him for their lives! Don’t give up, and thereby miss the opportunity to see God work a miracle!

8. Years ago in London, a poor, old wash-woman prayed earnestly and continually for her son who had left her years before to become a sailor. One night, out on the ocean, God found that wayward sailor-son, and saved him.

9. His name was John Newton, and he became the author of the hymn *Amazing Grace*. Behind that hymn, and Newton’s legacy, are the prayers of a mother who took her son to God when he could not go himself.

10. Notice something else about this woman’s faith in God. Notice not only her action, but notice also:

B. Her assurance

1. Through this whole scene in II Kings 4, there is a strange, calm, assurance that marks this mother. Though her son seemed lost forever, her words displayed a confident assurance in the outcome of her crisis.

2. Notice verse 23. When her husband questions why she is in such a hurry to go to see Elisha, she responds, “*It shall be well.*”

3. Now look at verse 26. When Elisha saw the woman coming, he sent his servant out to speak with her, and to ask her some questions. Notice this conversation. The servant asked, *“Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.”*

4. The truth is; all was *not* well. Back home, the lifeless body of her son lay as testimony that at that moment, things were far from well.

5. How could she say this? What gave her this assurance? Hebrews 11:1 had not yet been written; nevertheless it expressed the assurance of this mother’s heart. *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”*

6. Though all was not well at that moment, it soon would be. The story ends with the raising of her son from the dead, and the vindication of her faith in God!

7. This woman believed God! Her assurance was in Him. God’s grace had given her that boy, and it was God’s grace that she trusted for his life! She is an example of faith that clings to God tenaciously and receives from God miraculously.

8. G. Campbell Morgan was a dynamic preacher, pastor, and author. At one time, he was the pastor of the Westminster Chapel, one of the largest churches in London. He had three sons who also became preachers. Once, someone asked one of his sons, “Which Morgan is the greatest preacher?” The son quickly responded, “Mother”.^{iv}

9. Elisha may have been the prophet, but this mother is the preacher in this text. Her faith proclaims to all who read of it the power of faith in God!

1. One of the greatest preacher Ireland has ever known was a man named Willie Mullan. He was the youngest of seventeen children, and his mother was a widow.

2. When Willie was just a teenager, he became a terrible alcoholic. Night after night, he would stumble in from the bar, and collapse on the couch. Often, he would awake to the sound of his mother praying for him.

3. He recalled her crying out to God to free him from his addiction, and save his soul. She would pray, “Dear Lord, he’s in the grip of this thing. Oh, won’t you set him free!”

4. Even though he was a drunk, she would pray, “Lord, bless Willie. Save him, and make him a man of God someday.” When Willie was just 17, and still living in sin, his mother died.

5. For a while, Willie got even worse. He lived on the street for a while, and eventually got involved in a gang and crime as well.

6. One day, however, the Spirit of God caught up with Willie Mullan. A preacher had invited Willie to a gospel meeting, and not long after that, in a field there in Northern Ireland, Willie cried out to God and was gloriously saved!

7. In his autobiography, Willie said of that moment, “...all the joy and peace of the love of God came flooding into my heart. My mother’s prayers were being answered...and a new life for Willie Mullan had begun.”^v

8. In II Kings 4:37, the story of this dear mother ends by saying, “*Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.*”

9. It is the story of mother who trusted the Father, and saw her son brought back to life. Since the Old Testament was written for our example, this story reminds all mothers that there is always hope for their wayward children!

ⁱ Jones, Sam, Great Preaching on Mothers, compiled by Hutson, Curtis, (Sword of the Lord Publishers, Murfreesboro, TN, 1988), p. 109-110

ⁱⁱ Rogers, Adrian, Adrianisms – Vol. 2, (Love Worth Finding Ministries, Memphis, TN, 2007), p. 105

ⁱⁱⁱ Johnston, E.A., A Heart Awake, (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2005), p. 61

^{iv} Great Preaching on Mothers, p. 254

^v Mullan, Willie, Tramp after God, (Lakeland, London, 1980), p. 39