

# Empire Church of the Brethren

## Sunday Service Sermons

12 May 2024

A Great Woman

Text: "And it fell on a day that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread". *2 Kings 4:8*

Michael Novak wrote in Harper's Magazine (April 1976): "We live in curious times. Choosing to have a family used to be routine. But so many, so varied and so aggressive are anti-family sentiments in our society today that choosing to have a family has become an act of courage. To love family life . . . is to be marked today as a heretic."

Curious times indeed.

Did you think you would live to see the day when two lesbians would be permitted to adopt a child? Extremist leaders in the feminist movement have made mothers feel they have missed life.

In many homes a child is regarded as an intrusion instead of an inspiration.

The lifestyle that prompted the words of an old hymn, "If I could hear my mother pray again," is nearly an endangered species.

Unfortunately, too many mothers find it easier to play golf than to play with their children.

For some it is more exciting to hold a crystal cocktail glass than cuddle a child.

The words of *Proverbs 31* are being fulfilled: "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies."

In these curious times an inspiring example is needed for mothers, an example of courage and commitment, a pattern with which today's mothers might cut a new lifestyle from the fabric of life.

The Shunammite woman, whose story is told in *2 Kings 4*, is such an example.

This brief story of her life reveals that she was a great woman and a role model for women today.

Focused priorities.

Our priorities show who we are.

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Our priorities mold our living.

The priorities on which this Shunammite woman focused made her great.

Spiritual perception.

The Shunammite woman said of Elisha, "I perceive that this is a holy man of God."

She was interested and became involved in the things of God.

Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness".

Stronger homes will never come as long as HBO gets a higher rating than the family altar.

The Shunammite woman's concern for spiritual life is evidenced by her hospitality for the prophet of God.

The current condition of the family can be measured by the uneasiness many feel about their pastor visiting in their home.

Service to people.

The Shunammite woman was willing to get involved in another's life.

Jesus said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him by your minister . . . Your servant."

The community has many service clubs that do many good things.

Often our approach is to write a check.

Money is always needed, but it can be a cold substitute for compassionate personal involvement.

Personal service always involves a risk.

Satisfied with her position.

Elisha asked the Shunammite woman what he could do for her, and she gave no particular

request.

She was not complacent about life but contented.

We have so many earthly possessions in our day, but are we contented?

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.” *1 Tim. 6:6*

A world in need, a lost world without the Savior, will never be reached unless we reach the place where we can say with Esau, “I have enough, my brother.” *Gen 33:9*

Family partnership.

The Shunammite woman’s greatness is also seen in the way she coped with her family relationships.

Positive attitude.

For many years this woman suffered the “Curse” of barrenness.

Other women considered her inferior, and most thought she was guilty of some sin.

Evidently she did not become bitter nor turn inward and feed on her problem.

Neither did it become a barrier between her husband and herself.

Their relationship at first was characterized by communication and cooperation: “Let us make a place for the man of God.”

You may have experienced many problems in your life that were not of your own making, but it is in your power to determine how these problems will affect you.

They can be liabilities or assets.

Struggling with irresponsibility.

Not all was as it should have been in this home.

In later years, when their child became ill, the father said, “Carry him to his mother.”

Does this indicate an attitude on the part of the father that the work in the field was his responsibility, while the child was his wife’s domain?

Some families may have a man in the house, but he isn’t much of a father.

“Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

With only a small percentage of American homes having the husband as the sole provider, there is certainly a need for shared responsibility in every aspect of home life and family care.

When their child died, the mother prepared to go see Elisha.

Her husband questioned, “Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath.”

Did this reflect a shallow interest in the things of God?

Why go to church in the middle of the week?

You may have a spouse with little interest in spiritual concerns.

You may have to carry the spiritual load.

This woman did not always have a true partnership; she had to go the second mile.

That is why the Bible calls her a great woman.

Faith’s persuasion.

The most significant element of the Shunammite woman’s inspiring life was her faith.

What a tremendous declaration of faith she made.

With her only child dead at home, she said, “It is well”, when she got to the man of God.

Faith gives stability in the storm.

Faith supplies the foundation on which to rebuild when things have fallen in ruins.

Faith believes that “in all things God works for the good for those who love him.”

“A woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised.”

You might be praised for your pastry, poise, political persuasiveness, or pretty face.

Will God praise you at the last day, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

Can you join with Paul to say, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities . . . Nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Is it well with your life today?

Do you have eternal life in Christ?

Are your priorities pleasing to God?

Are you living by faith, serving others, and responsibly fulfilling your Christian calling in your home

and community?

This is an opportunity for these crucial areas to be made well in Christ.

Another great woman is found in *1 Samuel 25-28*.

A story of David being hungry and a very bad husband and his wife, Abigail who saves her husband from the wrath of David.

Lord, make us good men and women in Christ, this day and always.

Amen