

The Reward For One Mom's Kindness

A Sermon by Pr. David Johnson

We're often tickled to hear what comes out of the mouths of children. Well, maybe tickled isn't exactly the best word; exasperated, shocked, provoked, humiliated might be better words. But there are those moments when we are either touched by their tenderness, impressed at their innocent faith, or amazed at their grasp of the world. Sometimes we even have to admit they must have been listening during our lectures, I mean, teachable moments.

Since this is Mother's Day, I thought I'd share a few "profound" statements about mothers from children:

Why did God make mothers?

* To help us out of there when we were getting born.

Why did God give you your mother and not another mom?

* God knew she'd like me more than other moms like me.

What kind of little girl was your mom?

* I don't know because I wasn't there, but my guess would be pretty bossy.

* They say she used to be nice.

Why did your mom marry your dad?

* My grandma says that mom didn't have her thinking cap on.

Who's the boss at your house?

* Mom doesn't want to be boss, but she has to because dad's such a goof ball.

* I guess Mom is, but only because she has more to do than dad.

What's the difference between moms and dads?

* Dads are taller and stronger, but moms have all the real power 'cause that's who you got to ask if you want to sleep over at your friend's.

* Moms have magic, they make you feel good without medicine.

What does your mom do in her spare time?

* Moms don't do spare time.

If you could change one thing about your mom, what would it be?

* I would like for her to get rid of those invisible eyes on the back of her head.

Many a man has found themselves facing similar struggles when sharing their heart-felt gratitude for their mothers and their wives.

One such father was so unemotional that his children used to worry, because he never seemed to show their mother proper appreciation for her joy and the many ways she made their shabby old house a real home. But one afternoon she was gone helping a neighbor with a sick child when dad came home from work. He walked into the living room, where his several children were playing vigorously. Their father stood in the doorway frowning, as he was surveying the scene. "Where is everybody?" he demanded. Those children never again worried that their mother was not appreciated.

Of all the life-principles covered in the Scriptures, there are almost zero that give any kind of instruction to mothers on how to do their jobs. And other than 14 passages in Proverbs, very few of the 295 "mother" verses in Scripture instruct children on the proper interaction with their mothers. In fact, almost all exhortations to parenthood are focused on the responsibilities of fathers.

Likewise, the number of biblical examples of practicing mothers are extremely limited and several of those that are delineated are negative. So, to learn God's heart towards mothers, we're left with a handful of godly examples such as; Moses' mom, Hannah, the woman from Zarephath, the Shunammite woman, the proverbs 31 woman, Elizabeth, Mary, Lois and Eunice. Therefore, to focus our attention on godly motherhood today, I'd like to look at 2nd Kings 4 and peek into the life of Elisha's friend, the woman from Shunem.

To begin, we need to remind ourselves of the setting. Elisha was a powerful itinerant prophet of God who worked many miracles during his ministry to Israel. He had learned from the best, Elijah. But even so, when it was time to pass the prophetic baton, Elisha received a double-portion of Elijah's anointing (2 Kings 2:9-10). Such began the powerful ministry of Elisha.

Well, during one of his travels he came across a prosperous and generous woman from Shunem.

2 Kings 4:8-10 Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food. ⁹ She said to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. ¹⁰ Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, that he can turn in there."

Right off the bat we see several pleasant elements to this woman's character:

- * She initiated hospitality – She didn't wait to be asked
- * This wasn't a "once & done" – She regularly hosted Elisha
- * She showed spiritual sensitivity even before her husband
- * She made long-range plans for Elisha – 1st Mission House

All was going well, until one day Elisha decided he wanted to do something special for this gentle and generous woman. He wanted to bless her in some tangible way. After a series of questions, Elisha found out from his servant that she had no children and her husband was old, which would mean she would be left without support after his death. So he called the woman.

2 Kings 4:15-17 He said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶ Then he said, "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.

Life was good. The deepest longing of her heart was fulfilled. And even though she had found creative outlets for her nurturing spirit prior to this, she now had a son. Now she could pour out her generous spirit on him, maybe even to the point of over-indulgence.

2 Kings 4:18 When the child was grown, the day came that he went out to his father to the reapers.

This must have been a tough day for both mother and son; having to let go, and having to leave. One of the greatest challenges in motherhood is knowing when ...

and how to send one's son out to become a man. How do you let go, gradually but decisively; allowing the boy to move from adolescence to manhood (especially when he is a miracle son). Rebekah handled the transition poorly with Jacob. Hannah showed more balance as she monitored Samuel's progress. And this Shunammite woman must have struggled with the process just as many mothers do. **2 Kings 4:19** He said to his father, "My head, my head." And he said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother."

Sadly, tragedy would soon strike the woman's home. Her son collapsed in a field suffering from some mysterious head pain. But unfortunately, Dad was either too busy or simply indifferent to his son's plight. One can speculate endlessly about the stereotypical male issues here.

Luckily, his mother was sympathetic. But regrettably, no amount of compassion could keep her son alive.

2 Kings 4:20-21 When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her lap until noon, and then died. ²¹ She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door behind him and went out.

As selfless as a mother may be, there are still going to be tasks that are beyond their ability. One of those situations is having to watch as your son/daughter goes out into the world, first to school, then to college, then to a life of their own. Others find themselves at the bedside of a child whose sickness is beyond their ability to heal.

You might think that this loss would crush the woman. Her only child, the love of her life, dead in her arms. How helpless the feeling of a mother who has to meet these challenges without the knowledge and confidence that God is there to protect and provide when she can't. But not this resourceful mother. She didn't give up hope.

This Shunammite woman understood that her son was a product of God's grace at the beginning and would be God's responsibility in the end. For when that moment came in her life, she turned to the only hope she had. She knew that the man of God who helped her before could help her again. So without doubt or delay, she ran to get Elisha, in spite of her husband's clueless response.

2 Kings 4:22-25 Then she called to her husband and said, "Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and return." ²³ He said, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath." And she said, "It will be well." ²⁴ Then she saddled a donkey and said to her servant, "Drive and go forward; do not slow down the pace for me unless I tell you." ²⁵ So she went and came to the man of God to Mount Carmel.

The husband was clearly not a man of faith, nor did he show even the slightest signs of emotion at the loss of his son. To him, the boy was gone, and the only reason to seek out a holy man was for a festival or Sabbath. After all, apparently he had lived a childless life. But this mother was undeterred and her perseverance would soon be rewarded by God.

2 Kings 4:32-37 When Elisha came into the house, behold the lad was dead and laid on his bed. ³³So he entered and shut the door behind them both and prayed to the LORD. ³⁴And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands, and he stretched himself on him; and the flesh of the child became warm. ³⁵Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up and stretched himself on him; and the lad sneezed seven times and the lad opened his eyes. ³⁶He called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Take up your son." ³⁷Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground, and she took up her son and went out.

This woman is first introduced to us as someone who directed her "motherly" generosity and compassion on others in need. Soon, God would see fit to allow her to apply that kindness to a son. We then see this woman display an amazing conviction in the power of Elisha and his God. A conviction that would begin with the resurrection of her son and end in the restoration of her property (see chapter 8 verses 1-6). All this because a woman utilized her God-given mother's heart to bless those in her sphere of influence.