

Lessons from a Shunamite:

II Kings 4:8-17

I. Take a moment to consider some of Paul's parting words to the Ephesian

Elders: Acts 20:32-35

- A. **There were many** ways in which Paul imitated Christ: In the context of having made efforts not to take, but instead to be a blessing to his brethren, Paul quotes another "beatitude" of Jesus: *It is more blessed to give than to receive:*
1. Is not recorded elsewhere, nor do we know when or where Jesus said it:
 2. But this beatitude sets itself apart from the others: Those listed in Matt. 5 all involve what the one who is called blessed receives: *poor in spirit = kingdom of heaven, meek = earth, v 12 rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great: etc*
 3. In this, the Lord placed in the emphasis on the giving as being the blessing!
- B. **This is a difficult saying!** This is not the nature of many, we are eager to take, but can very hesitant to give:
1. In *Gen. 13:10* Lot illustrated this principle, when given the choice of land, repaid the kindness of Abraham by choosing the best:
 2. In *Joshua 7*, Achan would cause the defeat of Israel and the death of his family because of his eagerness to take for himself
 3. Isn't it interesting that when teaching on the subject of giving back in *2 Cor. 9:7* thought it was needed to remind brethren to give cheerfully! Not grudgingly!
- C. **Perhaps the closest** that we can read about Jesus teaching this principle is in ***Matthew 10:8***
1. While not quite the same, the principle at the heart of it is the same: We serve a generous God, and He fully expects for us to be generous in turn to others:
 2. In *II Kings 4*, we have recorded the story of an unnamed woman who perfectly illustrates not only this principle giving over receiving, but offers up several lessons that apply to being a generous active worker in the Kingdom.
 3. This morning we talked about how urgent it is that God's people have a mind to be about the work: Tonight we will try and learn some lessons from one who had just that:

Read II Kings 4:8-17

i. She saw a need and tended to it: 8-10

This was a time in which God's prophets seldom had a place to call their own, once they were called into the service of God: They went all over the kingdom proclaiming God's will, relying on the hospitality of others, and for the Lord to provide:

There were no fast food chains, or motel 6's lining the rough and dangerous roadways: This woman was happy to provide him with food, something that most would say was more than enough, but was not satisfied with those efforts:

She wanted to build on to their house! Give him his own place to stay! This is amazing generosity:

And in looking at the text, I can count at least three things that she didn't give a second thought to all the while!

a. She was determined to take care of his needs regardless of her own personal cost:

- i. Put your money where your mouth is! Often times people are willing to make great boasts about wanting to help, but when they are given the opportunity to do so, they are nowhere to be found:
- ii. Perhaps it is actually being faced with the prospect of parting with their funds, but now they are very hesitant!
- iii. Perhaps they begin to see many other places that they could use that money on themselves
- iv. Consider the role that this played in Paul having to exhort the church at Corinth:

2 Cor. 9:1-5

- i. They had boasted big! Paul had used them as an example for others! And yet when the time came to part with their money, Paul has to urge them to let go, and do it gladly lest they lose any spiritual growth that might come!
- v. When God talks about a cheerful giver, it is one who does not take personal cost into consideration:

b. She was determined to take care of the need, regardless of the time that it would take:

- i. If there is one thing I have to work on sharing more than money, it is time! Much the same as money, It is easy to make great plans, and offer to be there for others, but again, when given the opportunity, there may be little time to offer:
- ii. The construction of a room is not an easy task even today: (*Illus. of Mom and Dad's House*) And yet they were willing:
- iii. I think about time commitments, I think about the commitment John made to Mary: **John 19:26-27**

c. She never thought about passing the responsibility on to another:

- i. One of the easiest ways to waste time is to spend it pointing out what needs to be done:
- ii. One example that has always been striking: The attitude of the Disciples in **MK 6:35-37**
 1. These disciples who were very excited by the crowds earlier (1:37) had now grown weary of the day, and the constant chase of the multitudes:
 2. They need to go on, and get themselves something to eat!
- d. What is my attitude when faced with a need?
 - i. Am i counting all of the ways that it will cost me in time and money? Am I looking to see if I can get someone else to notice it? Or am I eager to take charge and get it done!

2. She was content with what she had.

- a. **For many, the** number one consideration when they are giving to others is “what am I going to get back from this?” Do you ever see that attitude from this woman? No!
 - i. The reward that she was offered by Elisha was not a bluff or an empty boast that could not be fulfilled!
 - ii. Elisha had the ear of the King, he had the ear of the Captain in the army: Elisha was even one that would have the ear of the rulers of other nations (Ch. 5)

iii. And yet when presented with this opportunity what was her reply? I live among my own people: I'm content! I'm happy as I am! How many today would turn down the opportunity for a blank check in return for their actions?

i. This was an attitude that even Elisha's own servant couldn't display (Ch. 5)

b. How much better off I would be if my only motivating factor in helping others, or in taking care of any need, was nothing more than knowing I'm pleasing the Lord! I imagine that I'd be even more motivated to take care of more needs!

3. Reasons that it is more blessed to give than to receive:

a. It means that we have been put in the position that we are able to give instead of needing to be given to.

i. This simple fact means that we have been richly blessed by the Lord in this life!

ii. It is part of what Paul was telling the church at Corinth in *2 Cor: 8:14* when he spoke about their abundance of having being able to fulfill their abundance of lacking?

iii. We don't say this to disparage anyone who has needed help, but I think that most of us given the choice of being in a position where we could give to others, or needed to be given to, would choose the first-- And if we are in that position then we need to thank God that He has put us there, and look for ways to share that blessing with others;

b. By displaying the attitude of the Lord in this way, we are able to encourage, and set a good example for, the one we give to:

i. There is a stigma of shame that has been attached to needing help: It is unfortunate and I think in many ways has come from people who displayed attitudes opposite of the Shunamite.

ii. But every opportunity to help others, is an opportunity to grow their faith in God, that He is providing for them through their promised spiritual family, and to encourage their faith as they see the generosity of their brothers and sisters:

Conclusion:

- The Majority of these points have been anchored in lessons from the physical meetings of needs that the Shunamite undertook:
- But each of these points is applicable on a large and broad scale to any activity in God's Kingdom:
- Am I looking for work to do in the vineyard, regardless of what I'll have to put in to get it done: Am I doing it simply for the joy of serving God because He has put in the position where I am able?