Classroom Low Jun Yew (127)

7 April 2021 Message 1 of 2

ESV 15 Minutes

**The Greatest Investment**

***2 Kings 4:1-37***

**Topic:** Faith

**Subject:** What are the results of trusting in God?

**Complement:** God will meet your needs and restore your life

**Purpose:** The listeners will put their faith in God.

**Meditation:** Psalm 119: 25-32

**Reading:** 2 Kings 4: 1-37

**Song:** It is well with my soul

**Benediction:** 2 Corinthians 5: 7

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Intro:  1. Arouse interest  by raising curiosity | What is your greatest investment? Well, I’m sure some of us here are familiar with stocks and shares, dabbled with Bitcoin, or do a little bit of collecting like our brother Howard here! But in any case, we are all involved in some kind of investment, so long as we have put our time, effort, and trust in it. This could be the time you spent with your family, or practicing singing, a house you bought, or even the great effort put in just to go through SBC here! We are all invested in something, hoping that it will grow into fruition and reap its benefits one day.  But for an investment to be good, it must be able to answer these two questions: does it provide high returns, and does it have low risk of failing in the long run? I’m sure for most of our investments may be able to answer these two questions well, but there is a third question that somehow all investments will fail to answer it well – is it ever enough for you? |
| 2. Raise need | The problem is that even our greatest investments will not be able to satisfy *all* our needs in life. It is never enough! But what if I told you that there is one investment that we can trust in that will provide us with the greatest gain, the lowest risk, and *will* be enough to satisfy all our needs in life?  Today, let me prove to you that God is the greatest investment that we should trust in. |
| 3. Subject restatement | So, what are the results of trusting in God? What is so great about trusting him? What kind of return on investment comes when trusting in God? |
| 4. Background | These might be questions asked by the Israelites during the time of the divided kingdoms of Israel. At that time, Israel was torn apart because of their wickedness and rebellion against God, they decided that the God Yahweh was not so great after all and instead decided to put their faith in the god Baal. Yet, despite the nation’s rampant rebellion, God Yahweh demonstrates his grace and power to those who are faithful to him, and this can be seen through the miracles performed by Elisha. |
| 5. Preview, text | Today’s passage will show us ***two results of trusting in God.*** The narrative is taken from 2 Kings 4:1-37. |
| T, **MPI**  R | So, what are the results of trusting in God? Firstly, verse 1 to 7 says that ***when you trust in God, he will meet your needs abundantly.*** You will never lack when your faith is in the LORD. |
| 4: 1 | The passage starts off immediately with a grim story of how a god-fearing servant of Elisha has just passed away, leaving behind a widow with two children. What is more troubling for the widow is that in order to pay off her late husband’s debts, her children will have to be sold to the creditor as slaves! She is about to lose everything in her life. |
| SP “A” | But what was her response? Instead of running away from the problem or finding solutions on her own, her immediate response was to go to Elisha the prophet for help, believing that he can intercede for her. Likewise, what is our own response when we are faced with our own problems and grief? Do we rely on our own strengths, or pray to God? Let it be our first instinct to turn to God for help in our need. |
| 4: 2 – 5 | What happens next is Elisha’s rather strange instructions for the widow. After finding out that she only has a jar of oil at home, he instructs her to go to all her neighbors and borrow as many jars as possible. Then afterwards she is to shut herself in the house with her sons and pour the little oil she has into all the empty jars. |
| SP “B”, Explanation | If I was the widow, I would just tell Elisha “thanks for helping but you are crazy man!” Why can’t Elisha just conjure up all the jars and fill them with oil using his miracles? Isn’t far easier and more convenient? I believe this shows us that God wants us to participate alongside him in his great works. Having faith alone is dead if it is not demonstrated with our obedience to him! It means trusting and obeying his instructions even if things don’t make sense at all! |
| APP, ILL | I can’t help but share this silly illustration on the concept of faith. There was a student who had to write a 300-word essay for his exam, and the topic he had to write about is “What is faith?” Being a smart and cheeky guy he is, he simply wrote his essay in one sentence: “I believe that I will score full marks for this essay.” When he got back his paper, his teacher wrote on his paper “100 marks for your faith, but zero marks for not following instructions”.  Having faith demands a response from us. Do we have faith in God? If yes, practice it by obeying his instructions to us. |
| 4: 6 – 7 | The story ends with God’s great providence for the family, where the little oil she has miraculously filled up all the jars she borrowed! The money she got from selling the oil was enough to pay off all her husband’s debt, and there was even enough left over for her family to live on. |
| SP “C”, ILL | What a wonderful God we have! He is faithful to those who put their trust in him, and not only will he provide for your needs, but he provides abundantly more than you need!  It wasn’t easy for me to make the decision of coming to SBC and serve God full-time. I had to give up my career, and I was worried for my immediate needs of money to provide for my future. But I trusted God that he will provide for my needs because he called me to ministry, and oh how he abundantly did! I had opportunities to teach piano part-time, all while serving in church and studying in SBC! God took the little that I had and multiplied it, not because I was deserving but because he is faithful. |
| T | So, let us put our trust in God because he will meet your needs abundantly. The passage moves on to the next story about a Shunammite woman, which presents to us the second result of trusting God. Verse 8 to 37 tells us that… |
| **MPII, R** | ***When you trust in God, he will restore your life.*** Your faith in him will lead to personal renewal. |
| 4: 8 – 20 | The story begins with a Shunammite woman showing hospitality to Elisha by inviting him to stay and eat at her house every time he passes by. God then rewards her by granting her wish to have a son to inherit her wealth despite their old age.  But again, the story takes a drastic turn where her son while working in the fields, suddenly died! |
| SP “A”, Explanation | Again, if I was the Shunammite woman, I would be thinking: “Elisha’s prophecy came true and God has blessed me with a son, but now he just simply takes him away? It’s so unfair!” But we must realize that God is both the giver and taker of life, because our lives belong to God! |
| ILL | Just like how my dad allows me to borrow his car whenever I need it to run errands for my own convenience, but he too has the right to take the car back as and when he needs to. God who has the ownership of life, has the right to give and take it away. |
| 4: 21 – 28 | Continuing on to verses 21 to 28, it is remarkable to see the Shunammite woman’s faith at work, where she remembers Elisha’s prophecy and refuses to accept her son’s death just yet. She did not lose faith and hastily went to find Elisha even when it was not a favorable time. It was only then that she expressed her grief to Elisha saying, “Did I not say, “Do not deceive me?” Do not raise my expectations? Remember your promise Elisha!” Even while suffering under the grief of death, she continued to trust God and did not doubt his goodness. |
| SP “B”, ILL | This reminds me of the hymn “it is well with my soul”, written by Horatio Spafford, inspired after the horrific accident involving a steamship that killed all four of his daughters. The first verse goes like this “when peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul”. What led him to pen down these words? Was it his loss and anguish? Surely, but more than that is the profound trust and understanding of God’s heart even through the midst of suffering and death.  Will we be ready too to trust God even when death is all around us? Will we stand firm in him and say, “whatever my lot, you have taught me to say it is well with my soul”? |
| 4: 29 – 37 | As the story draws towards a climatic ending, Elisha sends his servant Gehazi to raise her son to life, but which he failed. And so Elisha goes to her house himself and raises the son back to life after he prayed to God. |
| SP “C”, explanation | So what does this mean for us then? Does it mean God can raise our loved ones from the dead if we trust him? Surely God has the power to work such a miracle, but I choose to believe that this is only but a foreshadow of the eternal life that God can give us through his own son Jesus Christ. Life here on earth is precious and beautiful but it is temporal, what is more important is eternal life that God provides that is permanent and perfect. By trusting in God and his providence of Jesus who died for our sins can we be saved and have life after death.  It is only with this hope we have after death that gives us the purpose to the life we live now, restoring life to its fullest. |
| T | So, what are the results of trusting in God? The stories of these two women showed us that we can… |
| **MI** | Trust God to have our needs met and your life restored. I started off the sermon by asking what your greatest investment is. Well, I believe that trusting God is *the* greatest investment we can ever have in this life, because we can be sure that he will provide more than what we need, and we stand to gain the greatest gift of a perfected life through Christ.  I would like to give some practical applications on how you can exercise your faith in God. |
| APP (Write) | Firstly, write down all your worries and problems that you may face daily and confess them to God. This allows us to recognize that we are suffering in this world and we need to consistently remind ourselves to rely on him and not on our own understanding. |
| APP (Share) | Secondly, share your troubles with your trusted friends or accountability groups so that they can pray along with you too. Our faith involves the church too as we learn to help one another along this journey together. |
| APP (Record) | Lastly, record all your answered prayers and blessings in your life. We tend to focus on the bad things happening around us that we forget all the good that God provides for us. So, recall these when you face troubles and start to doubt God’s goodness. |
| End | May we all put our trust in God and make him our greatest investment for the rest of our lives. |

# Study Questions (Step 1)

# Context: What did the author record just prior to this passage?

### The author records Israel’s victory over Moab, where the three kings of Israel, Judah and Edom worked together as an alliance and trusted in the God of Elisha. It ends abruptly when the defeated king of Moab sacrifices his own son, causing the Israelite forces to retreat back to their homeland.

# Purpose: Why is this passage in the Bible?

### It begins to detail the miracles of Elisha, demonstrating the same level of power his predecessor Elijah possessed, and how God uses him mightily as his prophet to help people in need.

# Background: What historical context helps us understand this passage?

### Jehoram was king in Israel, during the reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah. It was the time of the divided kingdoms (2 Kings 3:1-8:15) Chapter 3 records the war against Moab and Israel’s eventual victory over them, a selected event to show Elisha’s power in his word after he succeeded Elijah after his ascension. 2 Kings Chapter 4 now accounts the miraculous happenings around Elisha.

# Sources Used

### Wiseman, Donald J. *1 and 2 Kings: An Introduction and Commentary*. Nottingham: IVP, 2008.

### House, Paul R. *1, 2 Kings.* In The New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995.

### Longman, III T., and David E. Garland. “1 Kings – Job.” In *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary.* Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988.

# Questions & Answers (cf. p. 22 #1)

### What was the significance of being a widow? The widow would not be able to meet her financial needs because of the loss of her husband, who was often to be the breadwinner of the household. With his death, the burden of paying the outstanding debts would now be on the widow, and being incapable of paying it off, she would have to sell her sons to the creditor as slaves.

### What was the significance of Elisha asking the widow what she has in her house? Perhaps he wanted her to participate in the miracle that was to come, getting her to give and entrust the little that she has to God and allowing him to multiply it.

### Why would the woman obey Elisha’s seemingly bizarre instructions? Perhaps she was desperate for a solution given her dire circumstances and had nothing more to lose but to follow Elisha’s instructions. But perhaps more rightly, she trusted Elisha as her husband’s master prophet and that he would care for her needs.

### Why did Elisha ask the widow to borrow jars from her neighbors and not just perform the miracle there and then? This could be a way to measure her faith, that the more she believes, the more she will borrow jars and have even more to pour into. The amount of oil she could get was only limited by her own faith.

### Why shut the door and keep the matter private? This was to show the power of God being able to work through his servant from a distance, and yet show his personal involvement in the person’s life (in a way, the miracle was only for the widow’s family to witness).

### Why would the Shunammite call Elisha a holy man? She recognizes him as a distinct prophet of God who was renowned and might have heard of the miracles he did.

### What was the significance of having a room on the roof with walls for Elisha? It was implied to be a permanent fixture that was designed for privacy, comfort, and immediate convenience. This showed the high level of hospitality and care the Shunammite gave to Elisha and was serious to having him stayover all the time he was around.

### What does it mean for her to say, “I dwell among my own people”? She is contented with what she has and has no political favors or even the need for remission of taxes – something that Elisha could acquire for her with his status.

### What was the significance of asking for a son? The Shunammite woman required to have a son to maintain her family’s title to her property, especially now that her husband is already old. Having her husband die without an heir would risk having all her property to be given back to the king or the landowner.

### Why did she respond, “do not lie to your servant”? She did not want Elisha to give her false hope and raise her expectations, but only to have it taken away from her. This can be cross-referenced to verse 28 where she reminds Elisha that she was not the one who asked for a son, but rather that Elisha prophesied that she would have a son.

### Why did the woman place the son on the bed of Elisha? It could be a symbolic act of remembering Elisha’s words and putting her trust in him. Instead of beginning the traditional mourning process, she has not accepted her son’s fate yet but instead chose to keep him in the room in private (she may have even withheld her son’s death from the husband) and find Elisha for a solution.

### What is the significance of the new moon or Sabbath? This implies that journeys and work were allowed in those days and may have been a favorable time especially for the pious followers to visit the prophet for worship and teachings. It’s almost similar to how we go to church on the Sunday Sabbath day.

### Why did Elisha instruct Gehazi not to greet anyone along the way? This shows the level of urgency Elisha has on the matter, urging his disciple to press on and not be hindered by any other distractions along his trip.

# Tentative Subject/Complement Statements

4:1-7

Why should we trust God?

How does God care for the widow?

Faith in God to provide for you when in need (limited only by our own faith)

Showing hospitality brings blessings?

When God blesses, he blesses abundantly (limited only by our own faith)

He cares for the widow’s family by providing for their needs through Elisha’s miracles

Establishing Elisha’s role as successor of Elijah

4:8-17

God rewards hospitality by fulfilling our needs

The way God shows care for the widow’s family is to provide abundantly for their needs (4:1-7) The response from God to the widow’s faith is to provide abundantly for her family’s needs /

The way God rewards the Shunammite’s hospitality is to bless her with a son (4:8-17) The response from God to the Shunammite’s hospitality is to bless her with a son /Possible Illustrations

### Text

# Possible Applications

### Text

**The Greatest Investment**

***2 Kings 4:1-37***

**Exegetical Outline 2 (EDITED) (2 Kings 4:1-37)**

# Exegetical Idea (CPT): The results of women having faith in Elisha despite dire circumstances were God’s abundant providence and blessings of life.

# I. The result of a widow’s faith in Elisha was God abundantly providing her family’s needs (4:1-7).

## The widow went to Elisha for help in her grief (1).

### Her husband has just passed away (1a).

### Her children were to be sold as slaves to pay off for her husband’s debts (1b).

## The widow trusted Elisha and obeyed his instructions (2-5).

### Elisha found a solution from the little oil that she has at home (2).

### Elisha encouraged her to borrow as many empty jars as possible (3).

### Elisha instructed her to empty the oil in all the jars privately (4-5).

## The widow was blessed abundantly through the miracle (6-7).

### All the borrowed jars were completely filled with oil (6).

### There was enough money made from selling the oil to pay off all her debts (7a).

### There was enough money left after paying the debt for her family’s provision (7b).

# II. The result of the Shunammite’s faith in Elisha was God blessing her with a son and later raising him back to life (4:8-37).

## The Shunammite extended hospitality to Elisha (8-11).

### The Shunammite invited Elisha to eat at her house every time he passed by (8).

### The Shunammite recognized Elisha as a prophet of God (9).

### The Shunammite prepared a permanent room for Elisha to stay every time he passed by (10-11).

## Elisha sought to repay the Shunammite for her hospitality (12-15).

### Elisha suggested favors that he could do for the Shunammite (12-13).

### The Shunammite was concerned about not having a son (14-15).

## God fulfilled Elisha’s prophecy and the Shunammite gave birth to a son (16-17).

## The Shunammite’s son passed away (18-20).

## Despite her loss, the Shunammite did not lose faith and went to sought Elisha (21-24).

### The Shunammite placed her son in Elisha’s room (21).

### The Shunammite urgently pressed on to seek Elisha even though it was not a favorable time (22-24).

## The Shunammite expressed her grief to Elisha (25-28).

### The Shunammite expressed her faith to Gehazi that her family was well (25-26).

### The Shunammite bitterly sought an explanation for her son’s death from Elisha (27-28).

## Elisha raised the Shunammite’s son to life with God’s power (29-37).

### Elisha hastily sent Gehazi to raise the son to life (29).

### The Shunammite expressed her determination to trust God and Elisha (30).

### Gehazi failed to raise the Shunammite’s son to life (31).

### Elisha raised the Shunammite’s son to life with God’s power (32-37).

**Purpose or Desired Listener Response (Step 4)**

The listeners will put their faith in God.

**Sermon Outline** (Cyclical inductive form)

# Introduction

### Interest: What is your greatest investment? Stocks, bitcoin, collections, house, family. But are their gains ever going to be enough? Are they always stable investments?

### Need: Would you like to invest and trust in something or someone that provides us the greatest gain but the lowest risk?

### Subject: What are the results of trusting in God?

### Background: Israel was torn apart because of their wickedness and faith in the untrustworthy Baal. Yet, despite the nation’s rampant rebellion, God Yahweh demonstrates his grace and power to those who are faithful to him.

### Preview: Today’s passage will show us two results of trusting God. The narrative is taken from 2 Kings 4:1-37. Verses 1 to 7 tells us that if you… (transition)

# I. Trust in God and he will meet your needs abundantly (4:1-7).

## Turn to God for help in your need (1).

## Practice your faith by obeying his instructions (2-5; belief in the writing an essay about faith).

## God will provide abundantly for your needs (6-7; opportunities to teach piano as a side job).

(Having faith in God requires us to trust and obey him, and he will provide for our needs abundantly. The text continues to show us the second result of trusting in God. Verse 8-37 tells us that if you…)

# II. Trust in God and he will restore your life (4:8-37).

## God is both the giver and taker of life (8-20; using my dad’s car for my own convenience).

## Trust God even when death is around you (21-28; “it is well with my soul” by Horatio Spafford).

## God has the power to restore your life (29-37; resurrection & raising to life).

(So, what are the results of trusting in God? The stories of the two women shows us that we can…)

# Conclusion

### Trust God to have your needs met and your life restored (MI).

### How then can we practically exercise our faith in God?

#### Write down all your worries and problems you are facing daily and confess them to God (Psalm 56:8).

#### Share your troubles with your trusted friends or accountability groups so that they can pray along with you (Philemon 1:6).

#### Record answered prayers and blessings in your life. Recall them when you face troubles and start to doubt God’s goodness.