

Kingdom Politics 3: Claiming Invisible Political Options (2 Ki 4.8-37)

Tim's notes are in italics. Type [bit/ly.nlncmu](http://bit.ly/nlncmu) into any browser for a series overview.

Getting Started:

- Why do autocratic leaders dislike Christians and even sometimes persecute them? – *Because Christians refuse to worship the leader or give primary allegiance to his (and it's universally a male) ways. Instead, Christians wholeheartedly and publically worship the Lord God and give primary allegiance to his ways. Even worse for the authoritarian,, Christians organize others to do the same thing.*

Background & Context:

- Who wrote 2 Kings, and when? – *Probably Jeremiah wrote it from the destroyed Jerusalem while the best of his peers were exiled off to Babylon. So Jeremiah was experiencing, big-time, the contrast of the working of the world of kings and the workings within God's kingdom. The messages of 2 Kings were a vital source of hope to the Jews in captivity.*
- How did the books of Kings get from Hebrew to English? – *Hebrew → Greek (Septuagint ~ 400 BCE, the version most used during New Testament times) → Latin (Vulgate ~ 382 CE) → English (William Tyndale ~ 1526).*
- What do you know about Tyndale's death? – *He was executed for translating the Bible into English. He was strangled to death at the stake and then burned.*

Adam/Eve... Noah... Abram, Isaac, Jacob/Israel ----> Exodus (1446 BCE)...

Israel/NK -> (850) 2Ki2 -----> (722) fall to Assyria
... (930) split
Judah/SK -----> (586) fall to Babylon
Jeremiah

Reading 2 Kings 4.8-37

v8-10

- So what do we know about the woman so far? – *She's a leading woman in the town and married to a man with enough wealth to add onto the house and provide for a recurring guest. She takes the initiative, appears to have the gift of hospitality, and the gift of discernment. And we see that she has a heart for the Lord because of her motive for ministering to Elisha.*

V11-17

- From these verses, what more do we learn about the couple? – *Husband was much older and likely to die before his wife and they had no children.*

- What does this imply? – *This upper-class wife would end up a destitute widow because she didn't have a son to inherit the husband's wealth and/or to take care of her as she aged.*
- What option did Elisha/Gehazi's first offer (v13) pose to the woman, and what does it imply? – *The world of kings is built on the logic of using power against the opposition to gain as much control as possible. The drive for power and control compels the entire political enterprise in the world of kings." In that world, there are winners and losers, and kings and their commanders are winners. So aligning herself with King Joram or one of his commanders connects her to the power and control inherent associated with winners? And, if a romantic attraction emerged with one of those winners, all the better for the woman.*
- What do you think the woman meant, "I'm secure and satisfied in my family?" - *Other translations use "family" instead of "people." Her net message was that she understood Elisha's offer was to offer her help from the world of the Kings but she chose to trust her future to her community that lives according to the world and politics of the King (the Lord God).*
- What does this offer suggest about Elisha? – *Maybe he was too close to the King himself.*

V18-27

V28-37

- Does v30 remind you of another time in 2 Kings? – *It's the same thing Elisha said to Elijah when he was asking to tag along just before Elijah was taken into heaven. See 2 Kings 2:2.*
- Why do you suppose Jeremiah included this story in 2 Kings? – *Maybe he was encouraging his target readers, the deported Jews in Babylon, to align their politics with the Lord God rather than with Babylon.*
- What allows the woman to see options for her future that are different than what the world of kings offers? – *She lives in community with God's people seems like all we know about her.*

Connecting to life:

- Compare the politics of the kings with the politics of the Kingdom of God today in the U.S... What current political issues do you see where there is a difference between the politics of the two? – *immigration, unbalanced wealth, gender issues, racism, treatment of unborn children...*
- How can we have the vision to see and claim the Kingdom's "invisible options?" – *1st PRAY for God to enlighten us with one of those "invisible options." If he does, he'll undoubtedly provide a way we can speak it into the political conversation. If he doesn't enlighten us in this way, keep praying that God will enlighten some of the Christians who are already in the mix of power with an "invisible option." God enlightened Elisha in speaking into Joram's administration back in 2 Kings 2. God is still in that business.*

- For a New Testament look at life in the Kingdom, check out Matthew 5.13-16. – *salt/light images*.
- What do you think it looks like to live as the “salt of the earth” or the “light of the world” within your family, neighborhood, or company? How might this happen?
- Take a look at the box below. What stands out to you as most helpful? Why?

Summary for today (For an up-to-date summary for the series so far, see website: bit.ly/nlncmu:

The world of kings	The world of God’s Kingdom
Finds hope in associations with politically connected and powerful people.	Finds hope in God’s long history of faithfulness to his people.
Operates according to a limited set of opposing political options.	Operates according to political options that often cannot be seen by the world of kings.
Perpetuates an oppositional political life marked by winners and losers.	Unlocks the potential of a collaborative politic.

Frances’ moment:

Session objective: To understand...

Prayer → let’s pay attention to the elements of worship today and look for marks of the politics of the Kingdom of God!

2 Kings 4:8-37 The Message

Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son

8 One day Elisha passed through Shunem. A leading lady of the town talked him into stopping for a meal. And then it became his custom: Whenever he passed through, he stopped by for a meal.

9-10 "I'm certain," said the woman to her husband, "that this man who stops by with us all the time is a holy man of God. Why don't we add on a small room upstairs and furnish it with a bed and desk, chair and lamp, so that when he comes by he can stay with us?"

--

11 And so it happened that the next time Elisha came by he went to the room and lay down for a nap.

12 Then he said to his servant Gehazi, "Tell the Shunammite woman I want to see her." He called her and she came to him.

13 Through Gehazi, Elisha said, "You've gone far beyond the call of duty in taking care of us; what can we do for you? Do you have a request we can bring to the king or to the commander of the army?"

She replied, "Nothing. I'm secure and satisfied in my family."

14 Elisha conferred with Gehazi: "There's got to be something we can do for her. But what?"

Gehazi said, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is an old man."

15 "Call her in," said Elisha. He called her and she stood at the open door.

16 Elisha said to her, "This time next year you're going to be nursing an infant son."

"O my master, O Holy Man," she said, "don't play games with me, teasing me with such fantasies!"

17 The woman conceived. A year later, just as Elisha had said, she had a son.

—

18-19 The child grew up. One day he went to his father, who was working with the harvest hands, complaining, "My head, my head!"

His father ordered a servant, "Carry him to his mother."

20 The servant took him in his arms and carried him to his mother. He lay on her lap until noon and died.

21 She took him up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut him in alone, and left.

22 She then called her husband, "Get me a servant and a donkey so I can go to the Holy Man; I'll be back as soon as I can."

23 "But why today? This isn't a holy day—it's neither New Moon nor Sabbath."

She said, "Don't ask questions; I need to go right now. Trust me."

24-25 She went ahead and saddled the donkey, ordering her servant, "Take the lead—and go as fast as you can; I'll tell you if you're going too fast." And so off she went. She came to the Holy Man at Mount Carmel.

25-26 The Holy Man, spotting her while she was still a long way off, said to his servant Gehazi, "Look out there; why, it's the Shunammite woman! Quickly now. Ask her, 'Is something wrong? Are you all right? Your husband? Your child?'"

She said, "Everything's fine."

27 But when she reached the Holy Man at the mountain, she threw herself at his feet and held tightly to him.

Gehazi came up to pull her away, but the Holy Man said, "Leave her alone—can't you see that she's in distress? But God hasn't let me in on why; I'm completely in the dark."

28 Then she spoke up: "Did I ask for a son, master? Didn't I tell you, 'Don't tease me with false hopes'?"

—

29 He ordered Gehazi, "Don't lose a minute—grab my staff and run as fast as you can. If you meet anyone, don't even take time to greet him, and if anyone greets you, don't even answer. Lay my staff across the boy's face."

30 The boy's mother said, "As sure as God lives and you live, you're not leaving me behind." And so Gehazi let her take the lead and followed behind.

31 But Gehazi arrived first and laid the staff across the boy's face. But there was no sound—no sign of life. Gehazi went back to meet Elisha and said, "The boy hasn't stirred."

32-35 Elisha entered the house and found the boy stretched out on the bed dead. He went into the room and locked the door—just the two of them in the room—and prayed to God. He then got into bed with the boy and covered him with his body, mouth on mouth, eyes on eyes, hands on hands. As he was stretched out over him like that, the boy's body became warm. Elisha got up and paced back and forth in the room. Then he went back and stretched himself upon the boy again. The boy started sneezing—seven times he sneezed!—and opened his eyes.

36 He called Gehazi and said, "Get the Shunammite woman in here!" He called her and she came in.

Elisha said, "Embrace your son!"

37 She fell at Elisha's feet, face to the ground in reverent awe. Then she embraced her son and went out with him.

Kingdom Politics 3: Claiming Invisible Political Options (2 Ki 4.8-37)

Handout. Type [bit/ly.nlncmu](http://bit.ly/nlncmu) into any browser for a series overview.

Getting Started:

- Why do autocratic leaders dislike Christians and even sometimes persecute them?

Background & Context:

- Who wrote 2 Kings, and when?
- How did the books of Kings get from Hebrew to English?
- *What do you know about Tyndale's death?*

Adam/Eve... Noah... Abram, Isaac, Jacob/Israel ———> Exodus (1446 BCE)...

Israel/NK -> (900) 2Ki2 —————> (722) fall to Assyria
... (930) split
Judah/SK —————> (586) fall to Babylon
Jeremiah

Reading 2 Kings 4.8-37

v8-10

- So what do we know about the woman so far?

V11-17

- From these verses, what more do we learn about the couple?
- What does this imply?
- What option did Elisha/Gehazi's first offer (v13) pose to the woman, and what does it imply?
- What do you think the woman meant, "I'm secure and satisfied in my family?"
- What does this offer suggest about Elisha?

V18-27

V28-37

- Does v30 remind you of another time in 2 Kings?
- Why do you suppose Jeremiah included this story in 2 Kings?

- What allows the woman to see options for her future that are different than what the world of kings offers?

Connecting to life:

- Compare the politics of the kings with the politics of the Kingdom of God today in the U.S... What current political issues do you see where there is a difference between the politics of the two?
- How can we have the vision to see and claim the Kingdom's "invisible options?"
- For a New Testament look at life in the Kingdom, check out Matthew 5.13-16.
- What do you think it looks like to live as the "salt of the earth" or the "light of the world" within your family, neighborhood, or company? How might this happen?
- Take a look at the box below. What stands out to you as most helpful? Why?

Summary for today:

The world of kings	The world of God's Kingdom
Finds hope in associations with politically connected and powerful people.	Finds hope in God's long history of faithfulness to his people.
Operates according to a limited set of opposing political options.	Operates according to political options that often cannot be seen by the world of kings.
Perpetuates an oppositional political life marked by winners and losers.	Unlocks the potential of a collaborative politic.

Frances' moment:

Session objective: To understand...

Prayer → let's pay attention to the elements of worship today and look for marks of the politics of the Kingdom of God!