A New Normal – Part 3

Finding New Rhythms of Life

# There Is More

## (2 Kings 4:8-35)

We are wrapping up our series “A New Normal: Finding New Rhythms of Life” this morning, and I want to remind you that there is more, there is more to your story, because God is with us. In this rapidly changing, disorienting, shifting COVID culture that we find ourselves in today, it’s easy to miss the exceedingly, abundantly, immeasurably more life God has for us because we think way too small. Many of us miss what God wants to do through us because we’re consumed by the temporary rather than being focused on the eternal.

Today’s message is entitled “There is more” and we need to understand that today because many of us are so caught up with things of this world that we’re missing the stuff that matters in heaven. Some of us are so in love with this world that we’re actually at risk of missing the glory of heaven and so we need to reconsider our priorities. That’s why the apostle Paul wrote this to the church in Colossians chapter 3, he said,

*“Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things” (Colossians 3:1-2).*

And he’s talking about having an eternal perspective, fixing your eyes on what’s unseen, not loving the world, but being transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Now, last week we saw Joshua taking the people of God back to Shechem, back to the place where God had covenanted with Abraham and it really got me thinking. Because now the promise had been realized, they had settled in the land, and he says now that you’ve successfully settled in the land don’t forget God. In other words, Joshua recognized how easy it would be to settle down and become complacent, because they’ve got the Word of God, they’ve got the worship, they’ve got the fellowship, but he doesn’t want them to stop here because there is more.

I was thinking back over the years of this church and there are just so many stories of people whose lives have been changed. The church has grown, many of you have matured and become pillars of faith, but there are some of you that don’t know where we started. There are some of you that don’t know what it cost and all the different people that have sacrificed and given cheerfully and generously over the years so that our story could continue today. Joshua took the next generation to Shechem to revisit the place where the promise was given to Abraham so that they could own the story and Abraham’s story would become theirs.

We talked about that seed of faith two weeks ago in part one and how we are Abraham’s descendants by faith. And today, I want to encourage you to own the story, because there is more. This story that we’re stepping into at Christ’s Community Church is A New Normal; and we’re finding new rhythms of life because there is more that God wants to do through us.

This morning, I want to share with you a story that some of you may not know, it’s a little obscure, it’s found in second Kings, chapter 4, but it’s a good story and I believe it will encourage you in your faith. Reading from verse eight, the Bible says,

*“One day Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat. She said to her husband, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us" (2 Kings 4:8-10).*

Wouldn’t you agree that’s a nice story? I love the example of this woman’s hospitality and her generosity, but there is something else, something beyond that, there is more to the story. And so, we need to understand that these three verses are just scenes, just part of the story, but there is more. In fact, some of you need to know that where you are today is just a layover, it’s just a scene, and when God gets done writing your story you will see the goodness of the Lord. That’s why Joshua took the children of Israel back to Shechem, back to where Abraham met with God, because there is more and that generation didn’t know the story and it’s hard to buy into it, to own it, when you don’t know the story.

And so, you’ve got to look beyond the scene to understand the whole story. We’ve been talking about planting seeds of faith, stretching our vision for a new normal, and even though the year is ending, we don’t want our story to stop here, because there is more that God wants to do through us. Our story hasn’t been told, and today you and I are telling a story, our story is merging with God’s story, but you’ve got to put in the proper context. You may find yourself so immersed in post, pictures, snaps, and scenes that you feel like you know the whole story, but there is so much more.

There are some of you who remember meeting in the town hall or the elementary school, setting up and tearing down week after week, all the way back to the first five families at Ski Liberty 20 years ago. You see, that my story, but it’s part of a bigger story, because if you didn’t know how God called me to pastor this church when I was a confused 14-year-old boy you wouldn’t be able to understand my story. And so, my point is that there is more to the story, this Shunamite woman was starting a story. The story started with her cooking a meal and building a room, she was hoping to be a blessing, she thought she was doing something nice for God, but God was looking for a way to do something nice for her. You see, this was just a scene, there is more, verse 11 says,

*“One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. 2 Kings 4:11).*

And so, he was just laying there in the bed she had made for him, he’s thinking how nice this was for her to build him a room, and he says to himself, “I wonder what I can do for her?”

He says to his servant in verse 12,

*“Call the Shunammite." So he called her, and she stood before him. Elisha said to him, "Tell her, 'You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you?” (2 Kings 4:12-13).*

Now, she’s standing right there, and so I don’t know why he didn’t talk to her directly, but he had his servant speak to her. And so, he’s like, “What can be done for you?” And she replied,

*“I have a home among my own people” (2 Kings 4:13).*

In other words, she said, “I’m fine, I don’t need anything.” You see, she didn’t give so that she could get something, she gave to be a blessing, and so she didn’t have an agenda, but Elisha persisted because he knew there was more. And so, he asked his servant,

*"What can be done for her?" Gehazi said, "Well, she has no son and her husband is old" (2 Kings 4:14).*

And so, she was fine on the outside, but there was this emptiness deep on the inside. Her story didn’t start here in chapter 4, because she had never been able to have a child, she had purchased countless pregnancy tests only to be disappointed time and time again, and so her story started many years before.

Elisha told Gehazi to call her and so she came and stood in the doorway and Elisha said,

*“About this time next year, you will hold a son in your arms" (2 Kings 4:15-16).*

And she did, it’s a great story, because when she made room for God, God did something in her that she couldn’t do for herself. And there is more, the Bible says,

*“The woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her. The child grew and one day the boy went out to his father... "My head! My head!" he said” (2 Kings 4:17-19).*

And so, this boy had an incredible headache, and his dad did what all good dads do. He told a servant,

*“Carry him to his mother.” After the servant had lifted him up and carried him to his mother, the boy sat on her lap until noon and then he died” (2 Kings 4:19-20).*

Now, the story has taken a turn, his mother had a decision to make, is this the story, or is it just a scene, is there more to the story? She decided there had to be more to the story and so she took him back where the promise was given, like Joshua took the children of Israel to Shechem, she took him back to the place where the dream was birthed. She went back upstairs to that empty guestroom,

*“Laid him on the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and went out” (2 Kings 4:21).*

I love this because she knew what to do, when you get stuck in a scene, you need to go back to the one who started the story. And so, she went back to see Elisha and the Bible says,

*“When she reached the man of God at the mountain, she took hold of his feet. Gehazi came over to push her away…" (2 Kings 4:27).*

But she was persistent because her story couldn’t end like this. And so, she summoned the man of God and insisted that he come back with her. “When Elisha reached her house, verse 32 says,

*“There was the boy lying dead on his couch. Elisha went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the Lord. Then he got on the bed and lay upon the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out upon him, the boy's body grew warm. Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room and then got on the bed and stretched out upon him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes” (2 Kings 4:32-35).*

Now, that’s a good story, but there is more, because the story didn’t stop when the child was born, it didn’t stop when the boy died, and it didn’t stop when he was raised to life. There is more, and so let’s fast-forward to chapter 8, there was a seven-year famine in the land, and verse one says,

*“Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, "Go away with your family and stay for a while wherever you can, because the Lord has decreed a famine in the land that will last seven years." The woman proceeded to do as the man of God said. She and her family went away and stayed in the land of the Philistines seven years” (2 Kings 8:1-2).*

And so, she went where God told her to go, but while she was gone, some people took her land.

*“At the end of the seven years she came back from the land of the Philistines and went to the king to beg for her house and land” (2 Kings 8:3).*

I love that because she walked past all the people who couldn’t do anything about it and marches right into the King’s court to see about getting her land back. I wonder if there are some of you who need to come to the King today to see about getting your joy back, your health back, your hope back? The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 4,

*“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16, NKJV).*

And that is exactly what the Shunamite woman did, she came boldly to the throne, and as she walked into the King’s court, verse four says,

*“The king was talking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, and had said, "Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done." Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, the woman whose son Elisha had brought back to life came to beg the king for her house and land” (2 Kings 8:4-5).*

At just that moment, she walks in and Gehazi is talking, she didn’t understand what was going on but Gehazi said, “This is the woman!” He said, “This is the one I’m telling you about.”

*“This is the woman… and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life” (2 Kings 8:5).*

At that moment, God’s provision met her need, God’s story met her story, and chapters 4 and chapter 8 are just scenes, part of a bigger story. She made a meal, built a room, had a son, lost a son, got her son back, moved away, came back, goes to see the king, walks in while Gehazi is telling her story and…

*“The king asked the woman about it and she told him” (2 Kings 8:6).*

The Shunamite woman told him the whole story. I wonder what story you are telling? Will another generation grow up that doesn’t own the story? Joshua brought the children of Israel back to Shechem, back to the place where the promise was given to Abraham, but the Bible tells us,

*“After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel” (Judges 2:10).*

What story will you tell? I want to tell the story of a God who has always provided for us. I want to tell the story of a church that is generous, sacrificial, and mission focused.

The Shunamite woman told him the story and the king assigned an official to her case and said to him in verse six,

*“Give back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now" (2 Kings 8:6).*

The miracle is not that God gave her son, even though that is part of it. It’s not that he raised her son from the dead, even though that’s part of it. It’s not that he delivered her from a famine, even though that’s part of it. The miracle is that God provided for her through it all and not only are you going to get it back, there is more, you are going to get it back with interest.

I wonder how many of you know, “that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, NKJV).

The Shunamite woman’s story began with a generous gift of hospitality, a meal prepared, and a bed made; but she didn’t know there was so much more. Some of you right now, you may not see it, you might not feel it, but God is telling your story and there is more. The Shunamite woman had an unspoken need and unlocked the blessing of God in her life with a simple act of generosity.

The Bible says,

*“The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and faithfulness” (1 Samuel 26:23).*

Some of you have felt like there has to be more to your story, but something is blocking you, and you need to know that the only barrier is your belief. The belief that God can do it, that God can use you, that God is bigger than whatever challenges your facing today. And so, I want to assure you, if you will trust God, believing what he said, you will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (Psalms 27:13). The only barrier to the blessing of God is your belief.

But some of you have been resisting, God’s been trying to get his word through to you, he’s been trying to get his purpose through to you, but you keep blocking his attempts. You have been withdrawing from him, you’re playing hard to get, just like the people did back in the day of the prophet Malachi. God had spoken to their situation, he had addressed the hardness of their hearts and their unbelief, but they wouldn’t listen, they wouldn’t receive it. He told them that there was so much more that he wanted to do for them, but they kept pulling back. Finally, he begs them in Malachi chapter 3, verse 10,

*“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).*

You see, there is more, but their unwillingness to put God first, their refusal to worship God according to his context, their reluctance to set their hearts on things above was actually keeping them from receiving God’s blessing. And yet, God made it very clear, “If you obey me, if you will trust me and put me first, I will bless you and open the floodgates of heaven.”

Decades ago, when my wife Dana and I first believed the Bible and received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we trusted him with our very lives, and so testing him with ten percent back to the local church was a no-brainer. We had been digging into the Word of God, absorbing it like sponges, and felt that tithing, like a believer’s baptism, was an opportunity to express our faith. We recognized that the tithe is a declaration of God’s ownership and every time you honor God with the first ten percent you are acknowledging his ownership. Leviticus chapter 27 says,

*“A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30).*

And so, as believers, every time we get paid, we have the opportunity to worship, reminding ourselves that everything we have is God’s and we’re going to honor him with the first ten percent. Very early in our Christian life Dana and I determined that whatever God blesses us with, no matter how big or small, we want our finances and our faith tied together because it important that they grow together.

Now, I know some people say, “Well, that’s Old Testament” like it’s some kind of escape clause, but that just means you should start higher, you don’t go lower. The Old Testament was a shadow of greater things and so why would you go lower when you have the loving grace of God demonstrated by his Son Jesus Christ on the cross. And so, yes, we’re not under the law, we’re under grace, but that means we can do more, not less. We want to go beyond, because there is more, and so we want to tithe, but we also want to be able to experience the grace of giving an offering.

You see, some of us have been stuck at ten percent, but I wonder what would happen if you went beyond? My prayer is that your faith will continue to grow as you trust God with the tithe, giving him the first ten percent, and as he pours out his blessing your faith will grow, your generosity will grow, and as the Bible says,

*“Just as you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us… you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7).*

I wonder what would happen if we really tested God, challenging our capacity for his blessing in this season? You know, what if you were to “test him in this” and allow God to stretch you beyond what you thought was possible? What if you were to excel in this grace of giving?

When we receive his Word and come to him with childlike faith believing that he is able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine, he’s going to push back the boundaries in your life, destroying the limitations of what you think life can be, and pouring out such a blessing that you won’t even have room enough to receive it. I truly believe that because I’ve seen it, and this isn’t just about giving, it’s about unlocking your heart. This is a new normal, it’s about what God wants you to receive, finding new rhythms of life, opening your heart to receive what God wants to pour into your heart.

As the year comes to an end, it’s his purpose working through us, there is more, we’re finding new rhythms of life, rhythms of grace as God enlarges our faith, our vision, and our priorities; taking the lid off what he can do in our lives. As we tell his story at Christ’s Community Church,

would you give him room to work in your life? You and I have a story to tell, the world needs our story, because God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. That’s what we are giving to in these next two weeks, it’s his church, and it’s his story, but will you tell it?

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

December 13, 2020

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*