

She had finally come to grips with the fact that she'd never have a child. It was impossible at this stage in her life. But then a trusted friend told her that within a year she'd hold a son in her arms. Was this a cruel joke? It wasn't! After hoping and praying for a child, she gave birth to a son, just as her friend had promised. All her hopes and love were wrapped up in this gift of God.

But, the God who graciously gave her a little boy, now permitted tragedy to enter her home. Her young son died in his mother's lap as she rocked him. That's heartbreaking for any mother.

If it hasn't already happened to you, it will. You will stand next to the bed of the lifeless body of your grandparent, parent, spouse or child. Their fingers ...no longer able to grasp yours. Their eyes ... no longer able to see you. Their ears ... no longer able to hear you.

Death is not a subject we like to talk about or even think about, even though it touches us all. Are you ready for it? You can be. Remember the hymn we practiced earlier and then just sang “*Now Calm Your Heart*”? God intends to do exactly that in our lesson.

Death is the bitter legacy passed down to us from Adam and Eve. But God wants us to know that even in the face of a death, and even as **Heartbreaking** as our lesson may be, he promises something **Breathtaking** for those who believe, even though they die.

Elisha takes a mother **from Heartbreaking to Breathtaking** to remind us of another legacy for those who believe. This one is passed down to us when Jesus will raise us from death to life.

As God's prophet, Elisha made regular rounds to encourage God's OT people. One day when he came to Shunem, a believing women invited Elisha to dinner. She proceeded to go *above and beyond* by insisting he stop in for a bite to eat, and by building a spare room for him to stay in whenever he was in town.

We don't know this women's name. Calling her “*The Shunamite woman*” takes too long. Let's shorten it and let's call her “*Sue*.”

There are believers like “*Sue*,” eager to go above and beyond to support and encourage God's called workers in congregations, like St. Paul's. They drop off something delicious to eat, or they take time to fix, or clean something at church or school, or write a note of appreciation. On behalf of your pastor and teachers we thank you. We see how God's Word inspires your acts of service. A testimony to your love for Jesus and an encouragement for others in their Christian walk!

When Elisha asked what he could do for her ... like getting the king or an army commander to help her ... she said she had all she needed. When serving, we don't try to get anything out of it. We have all we need too, don't we? We have God's love, his daily presence, his promise of forgiveness, his assurance of daily bread.

And even if we aren't repaid or thanked for our service to others, we have good reasons to continue serving ... we continue to hear about all that our Lord has done and keeps doing for us. That is why “*Sue*” so appreciated Elisha's visits. He shared a devotion whenever he dropped in to remind her of God's blessings.

While “*Sue*” insisted she didn't need anything in return for her kindness, Elisha was determined to honor her kind heart. When he found out that she didn't have any children, he announced that in a year's time she would have a son. This was something “*Sue*” had been praying for, but was hesitant to believe.

It's how a wife might feel if her husband said after supper: “*Great meal, honey. To show you my appreciation we're taking a trip next week!*” Should the wife start packing, or want more details?

Sure it was nice that Elisha promised an end to “*Sue's*” childlessness, but could he deliver on a promise like that? It seemed too good to be true. But sure enough, she held her son in her arms a year later, just as Elisha had said. And for the next

10 years or so, everything was wonderful. Elisha continued his visits, the couple's son grew up and helped his dad in the fields.

But after nourishing "Sue's" faith over those 10+ years, the Lord in his wisdom, would now put her faith to the test, to strengthen it even more. While her son was in the field with his dad, he complained his head hurt. His dad had a servant rush him home to his mom. He went to the place most kids go to get better ... being rocked on their mother's lap. Not this time. He got worse and worse until he died. Only a mother who has lost a child, no matter their age, can understand how heartbreaking that would be.

The death of a child is a painful reminder that even children are born with sinful hearts. Death is powerful proof that people, all people, all ages are sinners. And Satan would love it if we forget that. He wants us to think that while parents get older, children are safe from death. God has never promised that we, or our children will live to see our next birthday. We all need to make sure our relationship with the Lord is strong every day.

"Sue" laid the lifeless body of her son on the bed in the room they built for Elisha. She needed to go and see the prophet. Her husband's response is rather curious. He said: **"Why are you going to him today? It's not the new moon, and it's not the Sabbath."**

He couldn't understand why someone would want to go to church. So it shouldn't surprise us that she preferred to discuss this spiritual crisis with God's prophet rather than her own husband. And also why she said, **"It's all right,"** even though it wasn't all right.

We've been in "Sue's" sandals. We've had to carry heavy burdens in our hearts while no one seemed to notice or care ... even those close to us! That's hard to do. But she knew she wasn't alone and we know we aren't alone. She knew the Lord and his prophet would care. And we know our Lord cares.

Heartbreaking ... before her son was born, she had accepted the idea that she would die childless. Heartbreaking ... after her son's death knowing she'd be childless all over again.

Elijah sensed something was wrong when he saw "Sue" coming. He sent his servant, Gehazi, who asked if she, her husband and their son were alright. "Sue" answered: **"We're all right,"** even though they weren't all right. She didn't want to discuss things with him.

And yet, they *were* all right. Yes, her son was dead, but God would work a powerful miracle. Relief wouldn't come right away. God was going to exercise Elisha's faith a couple of times as well. Plan A: Gehazi! Have him lay Elisha's staff across the boy's face. But the boy remained dead. Plan B: Elisha! There would be no CPR, or any attempt at a miracle until he first consulted with the Lord in prayer. Another reminder for us. In times of crisis, the first thing we should do, we need to do is pray asking for God's help and blessing.

After Elisha prayed, he positioned his eyes to the boy's eyes, his mouth to the boy's mouth and his hands to the boy's hands. As he paced around the room the boy's body began to warm, but he didn't revive. As Elisha positioned himself on the boy a second time the boy sneezed 7 times and opened his eyes. Breathtaking!

We don't quite know what to make of Elisha's technique for bringing the boy back to life, but it's not a bad way to think of how in Baptism, it's Breathtaking the way Jesus breathes spiritual life into our spiritually dead souls and we're clothed with Christ!

It's also a picture worth holding on to when you stand next to the bed of the lifeless body of a believer. You can't bring that person back to life, but someday Jesus will. That's his promise and the Bible has shown us time after time that God has power over death.

And, like "Sue," we can say, **"It's all right,"** even when we're in the middle of something that no one else seems to know or care about. God knows! God cares! And should that something end in death, which many call: Heartbreaking; we can still confess: **"It's all right."** My Jesus will raise that believer on Judgment Day and I will see him, I will see her again." And that will be Breathtaking!