

## Introduction

- The twists and turns of a typical thriller plot:
  - its going right, then it goes wrong again, then it goes right...!
  - this passage is like that!
  - is God merely playing with people's feelings?

## A blessing of life

- Through 2 Kings 4:8-37, Elisha - Elijah's successor - appears to be a man who **knows God's heart for life**
  - he wanted to bless the Shunammite woman with a gift of life through a son
  - Elisha would have been acutely aware that, being married to an older man, the woman faced many years of widowhood ahead of her
  - without children, she would have been without security later in life
- God's provision of a son was, then, a blessing on more than one level:
  - first, the boy was of course the object of the woman's love...
  - second, he was her hope for security for the future - he was the likely means through which this woman would be able to enjoy life before death
- **God brings life** - he is the source, and his desire is for life, for blessing

## A fight for life

- But then things go wrong!
  - **the boy dies...** God mocking the woman's trust in him...?
  - the woman will settle for nothing less than Elisha's direct intervention
  - it was he who invited God's blessing after all!
  - she fights for the life of her son, even in death!
  - she **does not** give up, and pursues Elisha way beyond what would be considered "respectable"
- Elisha, for his part, also instinctively pursues life on behalf of the woman:
  - and his prayer - **enacted through the symbolic act of lying on top of the boy** - is granted
  - life returns to the boy
- God given life is worth fighting for - not something to be given up on, when life gets tough or the service gets boring!

## A fuller life

- Well, is that it?
  - what are we to make of this, 25 or more centuries later?
  - Elisha, the widow, and indeed her son are all long since dead
  - is that the whole substance of God's blessing - three score years and ten - or even four score years and ten these days!?
- **No** - for Jesus introduced another dimension to our understanding of life
  - where in the Old Testament physical life was the (miniature) canvas on which God painted the picture of his blessing, Jesus paints on a bigger canvas!
  - not so much the revelation of life after death, but the understanding that **he himself is life**
  - **he is the very essence of life** - of which this earthly, physical life is but a part
  - being associated with Jesus is not merely about laying claim to immortality - going on and on and on and on for ever
  - **life with Jesus is about becoming one with the source of life himself!**
- And that relationship, once entered into, is indeed eternal - for he himself is eternal
- So, on every level, **Christ offers life**, in terms if its:

- durability, longevity, and its quality
- in John 10:10 Jesus says: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."
- and we should expect nothing less from Jesus, the source of all life, through whom all life was made!
- awesome, abundant, brilliant, creative, forceful, bountiful life!

## A fragile life

- But, and this finally, how do we hold this glorious reality in tension with the sad and daily reality of the fragility of life now?
  - I did a funeral during the week, as you may have seen from the sheet, of a 22 year old young man...
  - healings and are the exception, though certainly not unheard of, and death is the rule
  - is God's promise false? Shallow? empty?
- **No!!**
  - but we can today learn from the Shunamite woman, and from Elisha...
  - and indeed from Jesus himself who fought for life even in and through death on the Cross where our new life was won....!
- Whatever life situation we find ourselves in, let us, together, fight for abundant life in a way that reflects God's heart for life
  - in our jobs
  - in our caring for the planet
  - in caring for the poor
  - in the way we vote this week
  - in our creativity, the things we make and create
  - in our bearing witness to others of who Jesus is
  - even in our sorrow and disappointments, fight for that which is of the life from God
- God can grow life, wherever we are, and he can grow it through us!