



Luke 7:11-17
"I Say to You, Arise"

11 Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd.

12 And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her.

13 When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."

14 Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."

15 So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.

16 Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people."

17 And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

How often do you stop to consider the "coincidences" in your life, that have led to great changes? For instance, you just "happen" to meet someone "by chance" who has a profound impact on your life. Had you gotten a flat tire or missed a turning or arrived 15 minutes earlier, you would never have met them – and your life would have been very different as a result.

On this particular occasion Jesus just "happens" to arrive outside the city of Nain just as a funeral procession is making its way to the cemetery. Had Jesus arrived a few hours later, the wonderful story of the raising of the widow's son that we have forever preserved for us in these verses of scripture would never have occurred. Instead the mourners would have made their way to the cemetery, the boy would have been laid in a tomb, the grave would have been sealed, and then after giving her a few parting words of comfort the mourners would have left the widow, and she would have been left, well and truly alone in their world with nothing but her grief and an uncertain future. Just another forgotten tragedy in a world filled with them.

But of course that isn't what happened, is it? We are told that as the funeral procession is leaving, ***The Lord***, and this is the first time in his gospel account that Luke calls Jesus "Lord," sees this poor widow and is filled with compassion for her.

Quite a coincidence that the only person in the world who could do more than just pity her, met her at that very moment wasn't it? We call it ***chance***, but of course in reality it is nothing of the sort, is it? Just as we know from John's gospel that Jesus knew well that his friend Lazarus had died, we know that Jesus also knew what none of the disciples did that morning: **that it was His Father's sovereign will that He should meet that woman and her dead Son and raise that Son to life again.**

As we discuss these verses, keep that in mind would you? That while from a human perspective, events like this one are coincidences, for we do not plan them or bring them about, from the divine perspective they are all included in God's sovereign plan. It will be very important for you to remember

that if as Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:29 not one sparrow falls to the ground without it being the will of the father, then certainly when someone meets with Jesus, it is no coincidence.

Notice too the object of Christ's compassion – He does not pity the dead boy, but rather his grieving mother. She was a widow, and in those days, for a poor woman like this one to lose both husband and her only son was a catastrophe, that people living in modern America can barely appreciate. There was no social security, no retirement homes. This woman was depending on her son. As Matthew Henry put it so well, she was hoping that he would be the staff on which she could lean in her old age, and instead he proved to be a broken reed. What real comfort could be offered to her now? All of her hopes and dreams were laid on funeral bier.

Therein you find a great application: Like the widow in these verses – You may have great hopes for the future, you may depend upon men, but to do so is to forget that this world is a vale of tears, full of calamities, and also to forget that **All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field.** And do you recall what I usually remind you of after I read from scripture? Time like an ever rolling stream bears all its sons away, it kills hopes and dreams, it takes away the very people we trusted or leaned upon. *Do you think for a moment that this widow got married, and then raised a son, thinking first this husband of mine will die, and then this my only Son will follow him to an early grave and leave me destitute?*

If you choose to lean on anything or any person you are leaning not on a strong staff but on a reed that will break when you least expect. THERE is only one source of strength and support that will never break, never let you down, only one source of support that never leaves or forsakes – and that brothers and sisters is Jesus Christ.

Sometimes in the Gospels Jesus helps people because they ask as was the case with blind Bartimaeus: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Sometimes he helps because others intervene on their behalf like the elders who went to Jesus on the behalf of the Centurion in verses 1-10 of this chapter, but sometimes it is not the request but just seeing the need that causes Jesus to act. Jesus here sees the need of the widow and acts upon it without being asked – indeed at this point, they probably think that even Jesus the great healer can do nothing so why would they ask. They should have known that all things were possible for Christ, and yet He has come to serve a people of little faith, and so He must act without being asked.

Now is there an application in this for us? I think so, I believe that far too often Christians are willing to help if someone asks, or if someone asks on behalf of someone else – but unlike our Lord – all too often you see the need, you have the ability to help, and yet you do nothing. Strive against that tendency.

Jesus who is full of compassion, sees this woman and says something amazing to her – "Do not weep." Now he is not saying do not weep because grieving for the dead is somehow inappropriate. As we saw last week Jesus himself wept for his dead friend Lazarus. He says *weep no more* because the reason for her grief is about to be removed. **We sometimes say "don't cry" to our kids when they have hurt themselves, but that doesn't remove the reason they are crying.** Jesus is not merely consoling, he's not merely offering sympathy, his consolation will be effectually – he is about to remove the reason for her pain – that is why he can say *weep no more*.

Jesus speaks to the boy, something that must have for a moment at least struck the crowd as crazy – he is not just speaking to a dead person – he is commanding a dead person to get up! "Young Man I say to you arise!" But then imagine the reaction of the crowd when the boy gets up and starts talking.

Were you or I to command a dead person to arise, they wouldn't move. We could command till we were blue in the face, it wouldn't make a lick of difference. But when Jesus commands, the dead are instantly restored to life. This is because when Jesus speaks the command goes out with power. The dead have no power to answer the call, but the same Jesus whom John tells us made all things, and without whom nothing was made that was made (John 1:3) can create life in an instant where there was previously only death. Why is this? Well it is for the same reason, that Luke calls Him **Lord** at this point in the gospel. Only God almighty has power over life and death, only He can do such a thing. This action was proof positive that Jesus was the one whom Isaiah prophesied would come the one called *Immanuel – which is Hebrew for GOD WITH US!*

Perhaps you still doubt the divinity of Christ? Then consider, Jesus did this miracle before a large crowd, it was then recorded by Luke within the lifetime of the people who would have witnessed it. Christian apologists in the 2nd century were able to point to these events as yet more proof for Christian truth claims: Quadratus for instance wrote in his defense of Christianity:

"The persons who were healed and those who were raised from the dead by Jesus were not only seen when they were healed and raised, but were always present also afterwards; and not merely during the time that the Saviour walked upon the earth – but after His departure also they were still there for a considerable time, so that some of them lived even until our times"

Even the Pharisees who hated Christ recognized the importance of what raising people from the dead proclaimed to the world and for that reason we read in John 12:9-10

9 Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also,

The crowd that day realized the importance of the sign and were struck with fear, for they knew that only God could perform such a wonder. Admittedly their view of who Jesus was, was sadly deficient – they call him a great prophet, someone like unto Moses, which falls far, far, short of the true glory of Christ. But later Jesus himself would prove beyond all shadow of a doubt that he was not merely a great prophet, or even the greatest of the prophets, by doing something that no other man had ever done – rising from the dead HIMSELF.

But you remember I asked you to keep in mind that this was no coincidence? It was the sovereign will of God that Jesus would meet that widow on that day, and by the awesome word of his power raise him from the dead.

Well, apply this to your own lives brothers and sisters, was it any coincidence that the person from whom you first heard the gospel message spoke it to you? That you met Jesus Christ that day through them? Was it just luck that you, who were as dead spiritually as that widows son was physically, were brought back to life? Was it just "lucky" that you believed unto the saving of your soul?

Hardly! Jesus Christ your sure redeemer took pity on you, and acted as only He could to bring you to life. He speaks through the living words of His gospel, and they go forth with His life giving power!

And if that is the case, then you have his assurance that it is not only your spiritual but your physical resurrection that shall someday take place. As Romans 8:11 says "**But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**"

On that last day, when Jesus returns even if you are long dead and resting in your grave, you will hear the words that Jesus spoke to Lazarus "Come FORTH" just as surely as you are hearing my words now! And then you shall be raised to everlasting life! That is a command which we will all obey.

But perhaps yet have not yet heard, and this is the day when by "chance" Christ has met your own funeral bier – if that is the case, then as his ambassador it is my great Joy to say to you ARISE! Be dead in your sins no longer, but arise to live in Jesus Christ in and through HIS POWER - **TO HIS EVERLASTING GLORY!**