

Rediscover Jesus

Part 17: Jesus and Death | Luke 7:11-17

Pastor Eric Yee

Personal Introduction

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm one of the pastors at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

Sermon Series Introduction

We're currently in Part 17 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're studying the Gospel account of Luke from chapters 4-9, which record Jesus' public ministry in the area of Galilee.

So let's get right into today's sermon: "Jesus and Death."

Sermon Introduction

There's a well-known Scripture passage that you'll find framed in some Christians' homes and posted on some Christians' social media because of the great comfort and great confidence in the Lord that it elicits.

<Show Lamentations 3.22-23 Frame.png>



It's from Lamentations 3:22-23, which says this: "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (NIV).

This is a *frame* of the passage, but as I looked up the passage on Google image, I found that the background for it was always some *serene* picture of mountains, or a lake, or the sun shining through the clouds, or a person holding a cup of coffee with a warm smile on their face.

But if we go back to the historical context that this passage was written, it was *nothing* like that at all.

Lamentations was written in response to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. It was written in the midst of the aftermath of the physical, psychological, and spiritual devastation caused by the destruction of the city and the temple at the hands of the Babylonians.

Now Jerusalem was *besieged* before it was destroyed, meaning that the Babylonians surrounded the city and cut off their food and water supply.

And the author was *there* when it all happened, and he gives a vivid, firsthand description of the suffering of his people and the rawness of his own pain.

He describes the rich eating garbage (Lam. 4:5) and mothers eating their own children (Lam. 4:10). It was a horrific scene of the most extreme and depraved acts of mankind as they were under terrible duress.

And in the midst of *that* kind of extreme sorrow and suffering, the author writes those words: “Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (NIV).

How in the world could the author write those words in such times of sorrow and suffering?

This question is very important for us to answer. Perhaps *some* of us are going through a time of great sorrow right now, or if not now, *all* of us will experience great sorrow at some point in our lives.

So *what* will enable us to be comforted and restored amidst our sorrows?

In short, it’s knowing *who* the LORD is. He is great in love, he is never-failing in compassion, and he is great in faithfulness. The unchanging character of the Lord comforts us in the ever-changing circumstances of our lives.

And that’s what we’re going to look more at in today’s passage.

The One Thing

The compassion of our Lord restores us in the sorrows of our lives.

Scripture Introduction

Turn your Bibles to Luke 7:11-17.

Just want to give a bit of context before jumping into today’s passage.

In the previous chapter, Luke 6, Jesus delivered a sermon describing the *values* of his kingdom and what it looks like to be his disciple. And now in Luke 7, we begin to see *examples* of people who *portray* Jesus’ kingdom values and what it looks like to be his disciple.

Last week, we looked at the beginning of this chapter, where a Roman centurion in Capernaum “highly valued” his servant “who was sick and at the point of death,” so he sent for Jesus to come and heal his servant. But *before* Jesus even arrived, the Roman centurion sent friends to stop him and to say that he was *unworthy* for Jesus to come to him, and he asked Jesus to simply say the word for his servant to be healed. Jesus *marveled* at the Roman centurion’s faith and then held his faith up as an *example* to the crowd of the kind of faith that he’s looking for. And the narrative ended with the people returning to find that the servant was healed.

And that’s where we are in today’s passage.

Scripture Reading

So let’s read Luke 7:11-17.

¹¹ Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. ¹² As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.

¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” ¹⁴ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” ¹⁵ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

¹⁶ Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” ¹⁷ And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

This is God’s Word.

Overview

We’ll look at this passage in three parts, highlighting three different parties in this narrative:

- I. The plight of a widow (vv. 11-12)
- II. The compassion of the Lord Jesus (vv. 13-15)
- III. The response of the crowd (vv. 16-17)

I. The plight of a widow (vv. 11-12)

Verses 11-12 say this:

¹¹ Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. ¹² As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.

So soon after healing the servant of the Roman centurion by just saying the word, Jesus left the city of Capernaum to enter into a town called Nain, which was about 25 miles (or 40 kilometers) away, or a full-day’s walking journey.¹ Jesus, his disciples, and the crowd following him probably arrived in Nain in the late afternoon, which was the time of day that burials typically occurred.²

And as they’re about to *enter* the gate of the town, there is a funeral procession with a “considerable crowd” *leaving* the town because burials typically took place outside the town within 24 hours of death as a *whole community* event.³ In fact, *everything* was suspended in the town for funerals,⁴ so *all* the people of the town were present at this funeral procession. And this would have been a *loud* event with professional mourners, flutes, cymbals, and a wailing crowd.⁵ And leading in front of the funeral procession is a woman—and we’re told that she’s a widow and a mother whose only son has just died.⁶

So you can imagine the scene: as the *woman* is leading a large crowd *out of* the town, they are met with *Jesus* leading another large crowd *into* the town.⁷

Now even though the occasion for this encounter with Jesus is the *man* who died, he is actually *not* the focus of this narrative, but in verse 12, *all* the references to the man and the crowd from the town are *in relation to* the *woman*. He is “the only son *of his mother*, and *she* was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was *with her*.” And this will become even more clear as the narrative progresses. The focus is on the *woman* and the situation that *she* now finds herself in.⁸

The death of a loved one is commonly understood to be the *most stressful* life event you could ever undergo,⁹ especially the death of a spouse and the death of a child. And this woman had experienced the *number one* most stressful life event *twice* over; she had lost her *husband* and now she had lost her *only son*.

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

² David L. Jeffrey, *Luke*, BTCB (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012).

³ R. T. France, *Luke*, TTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013).

⁴ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

⁶ Leon L. Morris, *Luke*, TNTC (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008).

⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, ONTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018).

⁸ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

⁹ “Top 5 Stressful Situations,” HealthStatus, February 18, 2022, https://www.healthstatus.com/health_blog/depression-stress-anxiety/top-5-stressful-situations/. See also “Top 10 Most Stressful Life Events: The Holmes And Rahe Stress Scale,” Pain Doctor, March 2, 2018, <https://paindoctor.com/top-10-stressful-life-events-holmes-rahe-stress-scale/>.

Some of us may know the pain of *one* or *both* of those more personally. I cannot imagine how emotionally distressing such loss is.

Nancy Guthrie, who lost both her daughter, Hope, and her son, Gabriel, in 199 days and 183 days, respectively, after they were both born with a rare metabolic disorder, said this regarding how she felt:

When I think back about those days, I think about some of the fears, I think about the disappointment because I know for me a lot of people say, “Were you angry?” I wasn’t angry; I just felt so disappointed. I had so looked forward to having a daughter who would grow old with me and be my friend in old age, and so I just began to let go of those dreams pretty quickly....

Finally came that night when we did wake up in the middle of the night and discovered that she was gone. Now I’m one of those people, I’m a planner. And I remember thinking during the six months of Hope’s life that probably grief for me wasn’t going to be as hard as it is for other people because I’d gotten a head start on it somehow—that knowing she was going to die and processing some of that during her life meant that it wouldn’t be necessarily as hard. But that just didn’t turn out to be the case. You know, there’s a difference in knowing someone’s going to die and having that person just gone. And the quietness and the emptiness that sets in....

Gabe and Hope are buried in the same little grave plot outside of Nashville. And when I think about those two days when we put their bodies into the ground, I think those were the lowest days of my life.¹⁰

Now for this woman in Nain, this must have been the lowest day in her life. She was leading her dead son—her only son—to be buried outside the city. Even though there was a crowd of loud mourners with her *at the moment*, she would wake up *tomorrow* alone with the sound of deafening silence.¹¹

But even more, even beyond the immense emotional pain, she was also now in financial ruin and a societal outcast, as she was now all alone in a patriarchal society. She was a woman, with no husband, and with no son to protect and provide for her. And with few openings for a woman to earn a living in the first century, she would probably become destitute.¹² She was a widow and poor. These were both biblical categories for the most vulnerable in society. In the eyes of the first-century world, this woman had literally lost everything.

<pause>

For us, not much has changed about the devastating effects of death. Death continues to steal everything away from us. Death takes away loved ones, and one day it will take away our very own lives.

But we don’t just lose everything at the *time* of death, but death *progressively* steals away everything that we love.

Death casts its shadow on everything good in our lives because nothing will last. “Everything you have—your healthy body, your marketable skills, your sharp mind, your treasured possessions, your loving relationships—will one day be everything you lost.”¹³

So how do you deal with death? What hope do you have in the face of death?

If you believe that this life is all there is, then the best you can probably do is to just *not* think too hard about death. The *more* you think about death, the *more* fear and stress it induces because it’s just a constant reminder that everything you have and everything you love will one day be taken from you.

¹⁰ Nancy Guthrie, “Nancy Guthrie’s Story of Hope in the Midst of Grief,” Crossway, video, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/nancy-guthries-story/>.

¹¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

¹² Leon L. Morris, *Luke*, TNTC (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2008).

¹³ Matthew McCullough, *Remember Death* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 123.

If you believe in an afterlife, most people think that eternity will be good for those who have been good and bad for those who have been bad, but how do you know if anyone has ever been good enough? So again, the *more* you think about death, the *more* fear and stress it induces because, if we're honest with ourselves, we *all* have regrets, we *all* have hurt people, we *all* have not lived as good of lives as we ought.

And so, in both scenarios, we end up trying *not* to think too much about death and trying *not* to think too much about what we believe in because it doesn't *really* bring much comfort in the face of death and all the sorrows associated with it.

But that's *not* what Jesus teaches us to do. He tells us to think about death *more* and think about what we believe in *more* because the more we think about those things, the *more* comfort we will have in the face of death and all the sorrows associated with it.

The apostle Paul says this in...

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 = "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When Paul thinks about death, he rejoices! In fact, when he says, "O death, where is your sting?" he is *taunting* death. How can anyone in their right mind look at humanity's worst enemy and *taunt* it?

And Paul immediately gives the answer. "The sting of death" is our sense of sin and the judgment we deserve before the moral law.¹⁴ *Because* we have broken God's law, we are sinners; and *because* we are sinners, we deserve the penalty of death—both *physical* death and *spiritual* death for all eternity. But *Christ* has perfectly *fulfilled* the law on our behalf, he's *paid* the penalty of death that we deserve for our sins, and he's *resurrected* to be our living Savior, so what can death *really* do to us now? Christ has *satisfied* the law, *suffered* our judgment, and *secured* for us eternal life.

Death is now the *door* to the fullness of *eternal life*. And even more, when Christ returns, death will be swallowed up and destroyed forever, and he will restore all things in the new heavens and new earth (Isa. 25:8; 1 Cor. 15:26).

Now in light of all that, the apostle Paul later writes this in...

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 = For this **light momentary affliction** is preparing for us an **eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison**, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Now Paul is not speaking as someone who is not acquainted with suffering. For Paul, sufferings and afflictions were *intense* and *constant*. He was beaten with rods, stoned, shipwrecked, constantly in danger for his life, endured many sleepless nights in hunger and thirst, often without food in cold and exposure, and constantly dealt with difficult, ungrateful people even *inside* the church (2 Cor. 11:23-28). He would see fellow brothers and sisters arrested and killed for their faith, and later, he *himself* would be arrested and killed for his faith in Christ. *But in comparison* to the *eternal hope* he had in *Christ*, he says that *all* such afflictions are just *light* and *momentary*.

This is what Ed Welch, author of *Depression*, writes about Paul's perspective:

It sounds impossible, or at least exaggerated, but we all have experienced something similar. A child falls and scrapes her knees, but her cries stop as soon as she is given a lollipop. **The pain has not disappeared, but the joy of a lollipop outweighs it.** Even better, a child scrapes her knees, but **her cries stop as soon as she is embraced by her mother. The pain has not disappeared, but the child has something even better.**

¹⁴ Tim Keller, *On Death* (London: Penguin Books, 2020), 30-31, Kindle.

A woman loses her job due to downsizing, only to be hired five minutes later by the firm in the next office—at a higher rate of pay. **We are all familiar with bad things that are outweighed by something much better.**

For Paul to counterbalance the weight of his sufferings, he needed something extraordinary, and he found that in Jesus.

Only in Jesus can we lose everything and still know that we have everything.

So as believers in Jesus Christ, we don't think *less* about what we believe in, but we think *more* about what we believe in to bring us comfort in the face of death and all the sorrows associated with it. The *more* we think about death in light of the good news of Jesus Christ, the *more* comfort it brings us and the *more* we can rejoice!

<pause>

Now going back to the widow, for her, again her plight was *not just* that she lost her husband and her only son, but she felt as if she lost everything.

Some of us are here today and we feel as if we've lost everything. It may or may not deal with the aspect of family, but you're undergoing some intense suffering and loss. And for you, I want you to know that God has a word for you today. The Bible never diminishes our suffering and loss, but it presents us example after example of those who have suffered and lost, and how God *met* them in the midst of it. So keep following along and relate with this widow here and allow God to speak to you through how he worked in the midst of *her* suffering and loss.

<pause>

So first, the plight of the widow; and second...

II. The compassion of the Lord Jesus (vv. 13-15)

Verses 13-15 say this:

¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." ¹⁵ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

So Jesus saw the woman and he had *compassion* on her. The Greek word translated as "he had compassion" here comes from the root word for "the inward parts" like the heart, liver, and lungs, meaning that his emotion had a *physical* effect; he had a *visceral* response to seeing the sorrow of the woman. He literally *felt* for her.¹⁵

Jesus is *not* left unmoved when he sees our sorrows, but he is moved with compassion from the inside out.

And what's more is that the compassion that Jesus felt was *greater* than the compassion that any of us could ever feel because he is *sinless*. Jesus feels the *most* pain and the *most* grief *because* he loves without sin.¹⁶ Our compassion is mixed with sin, so we're sorry and we say our condolences, but we just go on living our lives because we *don't* love the way that Jesus loves.

The *more* you love someone, the *more* it hurts. When your love is *not* tainted with sin, you actually end up feeling *more* hurt. The *more* we become *like* Jesus, the *more* we'll feel pain because the *more* we'll actually open ourselves up to love people. And the *more* you care about people, the *more* it's going to hurt when something happens to them.

¹⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

¹⁶ R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

Therefore, if you find that you don't feel much compassion for someone going through much sorrow, the *wrong* response is thinking, "I just need to feel more sorry for them." No, you need to learn to *love* more. And the way you learn to love more is to recognize how much *Christ* has loved you. "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who *loved* me and *gave* himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

<pause>

This is actually the *first* time that the writer Luke refers to Jesus as "Lord." In his previous sermon, Jesus asked his disciples, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46), and the Roman centurion also previously called Jesus, "Lord" (Luke 7:6), but this is the first time that *the writer Luke* calls Jesus, "Lord."

Now *why* does Luke decide to attribute the title "Lord" to Jesus for the *first* time at *this very moment*? Because *more* than anything, Luke wants us to know that Jesus is a *compassionate* Lord.

Before we think about Jesus as Lord in terms of how we must do what he tells us to do, before we think about Jesus as Lord in terms of how he has authority and power to heal the sick with his very words, Luke wants us to *first* know that Jesus is a *compassionate* Lord.

If all we know about Jesus being Lord is that we must do what he tells us to do, what will drive our obedience? Fear, guilt, and obligation.

But if we know that Jesus as our Lord sees us, has compassion on us, and acts accordingly, what will drive our obedience? Love, joy, and gratitude.

Jesus is not a *tyrannical* Lord, but he is a *compassionate* Lord.

In fact, this is how the *LORD God* is described throughout Scripture (e.g., Isa. 54:7-10).

Throughout redemptive history, the *LORD God* is a compassionate God. He hears the cries of his people in Egypt and delivers them from slavery and brings them into the Promised Land. He hears the cries of his people in the land, and he sends judges (or leaders) to deliver them from foreign oppression.

But it's not just his compassion for the *whole* of his people, but he has compassion for *individuals*. He hears the cries of Job and he speaks to him and his friends directly to vindicate him. He hears the cries of Hagar and he rescues her and her child. He hears the cries of David throughout the Psalms and he protects and vindicates him. He hears the cries of Jonah and he rescues him from the drowning waves.

Jesus, who is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:3) *perfectly reveals* God's *compassionate* heart for the sorrowful and suffering.

<pause>

And notice *who* Jesus does this for. In the previous passage, Jesus healed the servant of an influential man in Capernaum—a person with money, authority, status, and power. But *here*, Jesus healed the son of a destitute woman in Nain—a person with no money, no authority, no status, and no power. The Roman centurion was at the *top* of the social scale and this woman was at the *bottom* of it.¹⁷ But Jesus shows no favoritism. His compassion is just as *wide* as it is *deep*.

No matter what you have or haven't done, no matter what sorrow you're going through right now, Christ's compassion is *wide* enough to reach you and *deep* enough to restore you. No matter who you are, Jesus invites you, "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters" (Isa. 55:1). It doesn't matter if you have no money, no authority, no status, and no power; it doesn't matter if you're at the *top* of the social scale or at the bottom of it, *come* to him and he will pour out his *compassion* upon you.

¹⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Luke Verse by Verse*, ONTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2018).

<pause>

So Jesus saw the woman, he had compassion on her, *and then* he said to her, “Do not weep.” On the surface, this sounds *totally insensitive*. How can you tell a woman who has lost her husband and is now leading the funeral procession for her only son, “Do not weep”?

Nobody else could say this *except* Jesus because he was about to do something that was going to exemplify what he said earlier in his previous sermon: “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh” (Luke 6:21).

This was *not* Jesus *coldly* saying, “Stop weeping,” but this was Jesus *compassionately* saying, perhaps even with his hand on her shoulder, “Do not go on crying, for I am about to turn your weeping into laughter.”

And then, Jesus “came up and *touched* the bier,” which was the wooden plank on which the dead body was being carried.¹⁸ To be in contact with dead bodies was to render someone ritually unclean, but that didn’t seem to bother Jesus at all. He would gladly render himself “unclean” to show compassion to the sorrowful.

<pause>

At this point, the pallbearers are standing still. The funeral procession has stopped. The flutes and cymbals are just a fading echo now. The professional mourners are silenced. And among the silence, all that can be heard are the sniffles of the townspeople holding back tears. All eyes are on Jesus from both crowds.

And Jesus *spoke* into the silence, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” And the dead man sat up and began to speak!

If *you* were one of the *pallbearers* holding the wooden plank at that moment and this dead man that you’ve been carrying sat up and began to speak, how do you think you would’ve responded?

I think my heart would’ve skipped a beat and my mouth would’ve hung wide open. I might’ve even dropped the wooden plank and ran. I might be shaking in amazement. I might be on the floor in fear, wondering who in the world is this Jesus who can even raise the dead!

Now if *you* were *this man* who was once dead but now alive again, and you sat up and the first person you saw was Jesus, what do you think you would’ve said? Luke doesn’t record his words, but my guess is they were probably words of confusion, “I’m alive?” and then words of excitement, “I’m alive!” I think I’d probably be wondering how this could be. But more than that, I’d be overwhelmed with joy. I was once dead but now I’m alive again!

And if *you* were this man’s *mother*, and Jesus gave you back your only son, how do you think you would’ve responded? I think I’d still be crying but with overwhelming joy. I might even be bursting out in laughter in just utter disbelief that this could be. I’d probably scream shouts of joy and have snot running down my face but not caring at all how I looked to anyone else. I can’t even begin to describe the intensity of emotions I’d be feeling. What was once *unbearable pain* is now *indescribable joy*!

And in receiving her only son, the woman not only received her *son* back, but she also received back her *life* within the community. She would *not* be in financial ruin or a social outcast. She would *not* be without a protector and provider. She would *not* be consigned to a life of destitution. In many ways, in her *son’s* life being restored, her very *own* life was restored back to her.¹⁹

<pause>

¹⁸ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

¹⁹ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997).

Now I want us to notice *who* initiated this saving work. In the previous passage, the Roman centurion sent for Jesus and displayed great faith in asking him to heal his servant. But here, *nobody* asked Jesus for anything and there is *no* mention of faith on the part of anyone, but what is on full display is Jesus' *compassion*.²⁰

He saw the woman, *he* had compassion on her, *he* said to her, *he* came up, *he* touched, *he* spoke, *he* raised, and finally *he* gave.

This was salvation by grace from start to finish. It was a gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

And it is the *same* for us. For us, it is by grace through faith in Christ alone that we are saved from death to life, but we must know that even our *faith* is a *gracious gift* of God. It's not as if we were not drowning in an ocean and Jesus threw us a rope, and our faith pulled us onto the boat, as if *we* somehow had a part in saving ourselves.

No, just like this *dead* man on the bier, we were dead at the bottom of the sea, a swollen corpse without any hope, until Jesus dove from the shore to the ocean floor and breathed new life into our lungs, so that we could even begin to grab hold of him.²¹ Our salvation is entirely the initiative of God; it depends *not* on human will or exertion, but on *God*, who has mercy (Rom. 9:16). And so, we also are saved by God's grace from start to finish.

<pause>

Now before we move on, I also want us to notice one more thing in these few verses. Notice *who* Jesus addresses when he raised the dead man to life. He speaks to the dead man! He says, "*Young man, I say to you, arise.*" That means that even though his body was dead, *he*, in very real sense, was *still alive* somewhere. Though our *bodies* may die, our *soul* lives on. So when Jesus spoke to the young man this command to "arise," the young man heard it and obeyed (so to speak) and was brought back to life—body and soul.

And this is just a microcosm of what will happen on the last day when Christ returns. God's Word says this in...

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 = For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

When Christ returns, he will give the *same* command to all of us, "Arise!" and, as believers in Jesus Christ, we will be resurrected—body and soul—and we will be caught up to meet with our Lord as he ushers in the new heavens and new earth where we will forever be with him.

And can you imagine how joyous that day will be? If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, *you* will hear our Lord's voice. "Eric, get up! Tina, get up! It's resurrection morning!"²² Oh, the joy, the shouts, the trembling, the wonder, the overwhelm! One day, we will be forever with our Lord and Savior in our resurrected, glorified bodies in the new heavens and new earth.

Our only hope in life and death is that we are not our own, but belong, body and soul, both in life and death, to God and to our Savior Jesus Christ.

<pause>

So first, the plight of the widow; second, the compassion of the Lord Jesus; and third...

²⁰ R. T. France, *Luke*, TTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013).

²¹ "Election (feat. Willie Will)," track 8 on Shai Linne, *Lyrical Theology, Pt. 1: Theology*, Demodocus, 2013, mp3, <https://genius.com/Shai-linne-election-lyrics>.

²² R. Kent Hughes, *Luke*, rev. ed., PTW (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013).

III. The response of the crowd (vv. 16-17)

Verses 16-17 say this:

¹⁶ Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” ¹⁷ And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

So *how* did the crowd respond when Jesus raised the dead man back to life?

It says that “fear seized them all” and “they glorified God.” These two responses of fear and glorifying God—or awe and praise—are common descriptions of how people responded to *Jesus* all throughout Luke’s Gospel account (1:65; 5:25-26; 8:25, 37; 18:43; 23:47). And these two responses are also common descriptions of how people respond to *God* all throughout Scripture.

And then they say two things: “A great prophet has arisen among us” and “God has visited his people.”

The crowd realizes that Jesus is *not* just some ordinary religious teacher, but he is a great prophet. *Why* would they say that? Because in raising the only son of the widow, Jesus did what only *Elijah*, one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament, was able to do. In 1 Kings 17:17-24, Elijah raised the only son of a widow from Zarephath back to life, and Jesus actually preached about that widow in a sermon in his hometown that Luke recorded earlier (Luke 4:25-26).

There are *striking similarities* between the account of the prophet Elijah with the widow of Zarephath and Jesus with the widow of Nain.

- Both Elijah and Jesus meet a widow at the gate of the city (1 Kings 17:10; Luke 7:11-12).
- Both the widows have an only son who has died (1 Kings 17:17; Luke 7:12).
- Both Elijah and Jesus restore life to the widow’s son (1 Kings 17:22; Luke 7:14-15).
- And interestingly, the earlier phrase “Jesus gave him to his mother” in verse 15 is word-for-word verbatim in the Elijah account where he also “delivered him to his mother” (1 Kings 17:23 LXX).²³
- And after Elijah raised the widow’s son back to life, she affirmed that *now* she knows that he is a prophet (“man of God”; 1 Kings 17:24); and here, as the Jewish crowd is seeing the connection between Elijah and Jesus, they also affirm that Jesus is a great prophet.

But there are some *stark differences* in the way that *Elijah* raises the widow’s son and the way *Jesus* raises the widow’s son.

- Elijah cries out to the LORD, asking for his help to raise the son, and he stretches himself over the son three times (1 Kings 17:19-21).
- But Jesus does not cry out to the Lord; in fact, Luke calls *Jesus* “the Lord” (Luke 7:13) and Jesus directly commands the son to “arise,” and he does. Jesus has no need to do any ritual acts of stretching himself over the son three times, but Jesus’ words alone are powerful enough to raise him from the dead.²⁴

Jesus is clearly *greater* than Elijah was. He’s *more* than a prophet, but as Luke implies, he is the *Lord God* himself.

So though the crowd acknowledged Jesus to be “a great prophet,” it was still inadequate. It was a step up from merely seeing him as a great teacher, but it was still *not* enough.

And as Jesus continues to engage with the people throughout Luke’s Gospel account, we see an *intensification* of what he is able to do. He’s not only able to teach with authority, but he can *heal* with authority, he can *cast out demons* with authority, he can *forgive sins* with authority, and he can *raise the dead* with authority. And at the end of the Gospel account, we’ll see that not only can he raise *others* from the dead, but he can raise *himself* from the dead.

²³ Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke*, PCNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015).

²⁴ Mikeal C. Parsons, *Luke*, PCNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015).

And it's only *then* that people will begin to recognize who Jesus *really* is. He is no mere teacher, healer, exorcist, miracle-worker, or prophet, but he is the *Lord God* himself who has visited his people.

And that's *wonderful* news to us because the Lord God has come *not* to punish us for our sins against him, but to have *compassion* on us. Even though we have sinned against the God who created us and are rightfully deserving of his judgment, in his great love and compassion, he came as the person of Jesus Christ to live the sinless life we should have lived, to die the death that we deserved, and to resurrect three days later, conquering sin and death and securing forgiveness and eternal life for all who would repent of their sins and believe in him as Lord and Savior. *That's* the gospel—the good news—of Jesus Christ.

<pause>

Now in light of *that* gospel message, who do *you* say Jesus is?

- Is he just a great teacher?
- Is he just a good example?
- Is just a miracle worker?
- Is he just a great prophet like the people of the town thought?

On this side of his crucifixion and resurrection, in light of all that Christ said and did, none of those options are possibilities he has left open to us.²⁵

If you're *not* a believer in Jesus Christ, I encourage you to look more into who *Jesus* is. There's a book called *Who is Jesus?* along with its study guide that's in our digital library on our website that I'm sure any member in our church would love to read and discuss with you. I'd encourage you to continue coming to Sunday Celebration as we continue going through this sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus" and to join a LIFE Group where you can continue to dig deeper into the passages with a smaller group of people. And I pray that you would come to trust in Jesus as your compassionate Lord and God who has come to save you from your sins and to give you eternal life.

If you're *already* a believer in Jesus Christ, I encourage you to examine whether your *approach* to Jesus matches your *address* of Jesus. If you *address* Jesus as Lord and God, how do you *approach* him?

- Do you approach Jesus as just a great teacher where you learn theological concepts in a vacuum or gain practical advice to live a better life?
- Do you approach Jesus as just a good example where you're inspired to be good and to do good?
- Do you approach Jesus as just a miracle worker where you cry out to him when you need help but ignore him at other times?
- Do you approach Jesus as just a great prophet where he *points* you to God but is not *himself* God?

Or if you *address* Jesus as Lord and God, do you *approach* him as Lord and God over your life, trusting that he is our *compassionate* Lord even when you undergo great suffering and sorrows, even when he doesn't do what *you* want him to do in your life, and even when your feelings wane and your circumstances remain unchanged?

Jesus will *not* be received with strings attached as if he were some puppet Lord or puppet God. He is either Lord and God over our lives, or he is not.

<pause>

And if we know that Jesus is *not just* a great prophet like the townspeople thought at the time, but that he *really* is Lord and God, then we should *all the more* spread this report—this good news of Jesus Christ—through the whole of Jabodetabek and all the surrounding country and to all nations.

If *Jesus* is our only hope in life and death, then the *most loving* thing we can do for those around us is to share this *real* hope and comfort that is available to them in the face of death and all their sorrows in life.

²⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980), 52, Kindle.

So even amidst our current sorrows, let's pray for the love and boldness and opportunity to share about the hope and restoration we have in *Jesus* with those around us.

<pause>

As we close, we should recognize that Jesus' restoration of the widow's son was only *partial* and *temporary*. It was *partial* in that though she had her *only son* back, she did not have her *husband* back; she was still a widow. And it was *temporary* in that her son would eventually die again.

This compassionate raising of her dead son was just a *foretaste* of the resurrection to come. It was just a gracious *glimpse* into the new heavens and new earth.

Also, Jesus has *not* promised to *rid* us of all our sorrows and suffering *immediately*, but he *has* promised to always be *with us* in the midst of them, and *one day* he *will* rid us of all our sorrows and suffering *eternally*.

In the midst of your sorrows, fix your eyes on Jesus, who *himself* was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3) and who sympathizes with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15).

Look *back* to the sufferings of Christ and see your compassionate Savior who knows your pain. Look *forward* to the restoration of all things in the new heavens and new earth and begin to live by faith in your *certain* hope even in your *present* pain.

Jesus may *not* "raise our only son" (so to speak) *immediately* like he does for the woman, but he *still* says to us, "Do not go on weeping, for I *will* turn your weeping into laughter." He will *one day* restore all things, and our current suffering will *not* be able to be compared to the eternal weight of glory that awaits us (2 Cor. 4:17).

And so, amidst all the sorrows in our lives, we can begin to experience a bit of that *full* restoration to come *right now* by faith in our compassionate Lord.

The One Thing

The compassion of our Lord restores us in the sorrows of our lives.

Life Application

1. In the face of death and all the sorrows you're going through, think *more* about the truths and joys of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As believers in Jesus Christ, our comfort is found not in thinking *less* about death and what we believe in, but we find our comfort in thinking *more* about death in light of the good news of Jesus Christ.

No matter what you're going through, in the gospel, you have an endless well of joys to battle your sorrows. We would do well to draw water from that well more often.

2. Examine whether your *approach* to Jesus matches your *address* of Jesus as Lord and God over your life.

Do we approach God merely as a great teacher, good example, miracle worker, great prophet? Or do we trust that he is our *compassionate* Lord even when we undergo great suffering and sorrows, even when he doesn't do what *we* want him to do in our lives, and even when our feelings wane and your circumstances remain unchanged?

3. Even amidst our current sorrows, pray for the love, boldness, and opportunity to share about the hope and restoration we have in Jesus with those around us.

Testimony is one of the most powerful ways that we can share about Christ in a relatable way to those around us. When we share testimonies, the gospel is *not* just left as some intangible concept, but its effects can be seen in your life. We, as *fellow members* in this spiritually family, need to hear *more* testimonies of how Jesus is at work in our lives. And *all the more*, the *world* needs to hear *more* testimonies of how Jesus is at work in his people's lives—that in the face of death and all the sorrows in life, they *also* might share in the hope and comfort that we have in our compassionate Lord.

Conclusion

Can we all stand as we respond to God's Word together?