

May 24, 2020
The Marvelous Work of Jesus in Our Lives
Memorial Day Weekend

Scripture reading: Luke 7:11-17

Text: *“You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever” (Psalm 30:12-13).*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today we will hear about a special story about Jesus raises the widow’s son. The Lord went from Capernaum to the next town called Nain. It was about 22 miles, a daylong walking distance. His disciples and a large crowd went along with Him. When Jesus was close to the town gate, He saw a noisy funeral procession to file out of the town. Christ immediately noticed a weeping, heartbroken widow leading the procession that was bearing her dead son to his final resting place.

The body was carried upon a bier which was made from wicker. There was no casket, especially not a closed one at that time. The body was wrapped in burial linen, the face exposed that was covered by a piece of cloth. So the funeral procession was on their way to the burial ground, which was a cave, outside of the town where the widow’s husband was buried, too.

Now she was all alone in the world. Widowhood was very difficult at that time as it is hard enough today, too. There is the feeling of emptiness, the loneliness. Although there are family members or friends who help and support the widow, but living in the pain of loss each day is very difficult.

When the widow’s husband died, she and her son had to do the hard work of farming every day in order to put meal on the table. However, now this woman lost her son she was alone, and had no one to contribute to the household labor and farming. The son took care of his mother during her widowhood, after the father was gone, and he worked hard. But he is gone now. The widow remained alone and faced a bleak future. The greatest pain for a parent is to lose her child.

There were no jobs for widows. There was no Social Security system, Medicaid, no community welfare, no general relief for the poor. Since she had no more children she became vulnerable and needed the support and help of her town. She was very lonely, abandoned, and unfortunate.

However, the story did not end with this hopelessness and despair. The Word of God says, *“When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry’” (v.13).* Jesus immediately felt empathy and compassion for this widow. Christ fully knows what our deepest need is. This is because He knows us best and loves us so much.

Jesus' first impulse was to comfort her. *"Don't cry"*, He said. How many times have you comforted your child or your spouse with these words? These words mean a lot, but they don't remove the cause of pain, the reason for the weeping, and its source. Therefore something had to be done. My wife, who is a counselor, told me many times that if a positive change occurs in the circumstances, it leads to a 40% growth in emotional healing. So this widow needed something that relieves the pain, hopelessness, and despair. Therefore action followed Jesus' comforting words.

Then Christ *"went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still"* (v.14). The widow was in the front of the funeral procession with the other women, still overflowing with tears. However, now something strange happens. Jesus reaches toward the wicker bier and touches it. Let us imagine what happened. Suddenly the sobbing and wailing stop. Jesus says: *"Young man, I say to you, get up!"* Christ's voice is clear in the stillness, and all those around are wondering what will happen. Suddenly the dead sits up and begins to talk. An involuntary gasp is heard throughout the crowd. The people don't believe their own eyes. The dead young man now lives. He is not quite sure where he is. The bearers quickly lower the bier to the ground. They are amazed by what they just saw. A miracle happened in front of their eyes. And the greatest miracle happened in the life of this widow who did not have hope.

Then Jesus presented the young man to his mother. And he hugged his mother. More than likely she needed that since she hardly could remain standing, because joy was overflowing in her. Now there was talking, laughing, and weeping for joy. The crowd was in awe, and began to praise God and said: *"A great prophet has appeared among us"* (v.16).

The widow experienced the divine presence, the deliverance and the power of the Messiah in the midst of hopelessness and despair. Jesus knew the deepest desire of her heart: *"Oh, if only I could get back my son!"*, how many times she thought, or even said it, or shouted it by sieging heaven. This widow, by the grace of God, marvelously experienced what she may have heard many times in the synagogue from the book of Psalms: *"You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever."* (30:12-13)

Christ knows us best and He also knows what is best for us and what our greatest need is. Jesus so many times works for us invisibly, but with visible results. One day He suddenly "appears" to us and we see and experience the marvelous works of His hand. He sees the deepest need and desire of our heart, and He is ready to work in those things in miraculous and unbelievable ways. Praise be to Him! Amen.

Yours in Christ,
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Pastor