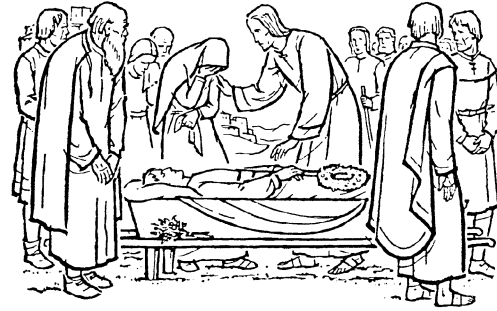


Text: Luke 7:11-17

¹¹Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹²As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” ¹⁴Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.



¹⁶They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” ¹⁷This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

Theme: Jesus Brings Relief with His Heart, His Hand, and His Mouth

Luke like to use the word “crowd” in his gospel. Our text portrays two large crowds of people which collide. One of these crowds is a joyful group. They are following Jesus. They have just finished listened to Him preach what is called the sermon on the plain. They were amazed at His teaching. Then they saw Him do something awesome. By His word He healed the servant of a centurion who believed in Him. The crowd was filled with a lot of hope and joy.

Then there was another crowd, which was coming toward Jesus and His followers. There could not have been as stark a contrast as with this group. They were coming from the town of Nain to bury a young man. They were full of despair and grief. A widow had just lost her only son. You can imagine the weeping, mourning, and wailing among this crowd, who accompanied this poor mother.

Jesus met that weeping crowd head-on with His joyful crowd, and He turned their sorrow into new joy and hope. This morning we will look at how Jesus brings relief with His heart, His hand, and His mouth.

- I. The funeral procession for that young man is a picture of how things go on this earth.-This world is full of suffering and sorrow.

Sometimes we make our own suffering by our sins. We do things that get us into trouble; things that we regret. They seemed like a lot of fun at first, but they ended up hurting us and a lot of other people. We can carry a lot of guilt for years, and we carry both the physical and emotional scars of many of our sins.

It’s not only our sins that bring suffering and sorrow. Sometimes there are things that we don’t seem to deserve and things beyond our control, which bring suffering and sorrow. The woman in our text probably did nothing to cause the death of her son. He probably simply got sick and died. It was all beyond her control. Have bad things, which were beyond your control, ever come into your life? There are times when sickness, disaster, financial troubles, broken relationships and many other things happen, and we find ourselves asking, “What did I do to deserve this?”

The worst sorrow is when we mourn the loss of a loved one. This woman had gone through terrible mourning twice in her life. First, she lost her husband, and then she lost her only son. In ministering to people these last 25 years, I can say with confidence that there is nothing more difficult than losing a child. This woman was in great anguish, and the people of Nain pitied her. A great crowd followed her to mourn with her. The worst consequence of sin is death. It destroys our joy and brings great sorrow. It breaks even the closest bonds of love. It takes needed support away. The procession coming out of the town of Nain was a picture of how things are in this world. We are constantly going out to bury those who have fallen asleep. Our world might sympathize, but it can offer no permanent joy or hope. It has nothing to offer except death, grief, sorrow, and loneliness.

II. But Jesus meets our sorrows head on and brings relief.

It began with His heart. Listen to verse 13 again. It says, “When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her.” The word compassion occurs throughout the Gospels. The Greek word literally means “guts.” It is when the plight of someone else moves our very being. I like the NIV translation of this verse, which says, “The Lord’s heart went out to her.” This poor woman’s plight moved our Lord. He began to grieve with her. He suffered with her. He knew exactly what she was going through because He had also grieved the loss of loved ones before. This woman’s plight might have reminded Him of how His mother grieved when Joseph died. The shortest verse of the Bible in John 11 shows how death even broke Jesus heart. John simply writes, “Jesus wept,” when He arrived at Lazarus’ home.

-In Isaiah 53:4 Isaiah prophesied, “Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.”

-The same is true for each one of us during our hour of need. The Lord’s heart goes out to us when we are experiencing sorrows, worries, grief, and loneliness. His heart is moved out of love and compassion for you.

Then the Lord *touch*ed the young man’s coffin. This is significant. According to an Old Testament law (Numbers 5:2-4), by touching the man’s coffin, the Lord also became unclean. Not only in His heart, but also by His touch, the Lord took this man’s infirmities on Himself. He could have walked by, but Jesus compassion for this man’s mother caused Him to stop and give His aid. That touch showed His compassion for this woman in a vivid way.

It was not just chance that Jesus was walking into Nain that day. It was all part of His plan that He could bring His help to that woman in her time of need. The Lord is not here to physically touch us as He touched many people who were considered unclean at the time, but He touches us in other ways. He touches us with His peace in His Sacrament of Holy Communion. Christ gives us His own body and blood as the assurance of our salvation. It is often in times of great need and distress that people especially desire to receive this Sacrament. Through it, the Lord touches us with His love.

-But He also touches us with the compassion of our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are times when we were in distress, and as Jesus happened to be entering Nain as the woman was going to bury her son, so the Lord sends someone to us in our time of need who speaks words of comfort and peace of gives us the embrace that we need at the time. He still touches us with His mercy as He touched that young man’s coffin.

Finally, the *words of His mouth* brought relief. Anyone can show the compassion that Jesus had for this woman with His heart and touch, but Jesus was able to do more. He told the woman, “Don’t cry.” Generally, we would not tell a grieving mother to stop crying at a funeral. We would tell her to let it out. But Jesus was about to turn this woman’s grief into pure joy. He said to the man, “Young man, I say to you, arise!” The man sat up, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Our Lord’s Word was so powerful that He was able to raise the dead.

There is something peculiar about this miracle. No one ever asked Jesus for help. Generally someone cries out to Jesus for mercy. But Nain was in an area where Jesus seldom spent much time. She probably had no idea who Jesus was. There are only two instances in the Gospels, which I can think of, when Jesus healed someone who never asked for His help. They are this story and the blind man whom He healed in John 9. In both cases the work of God was displayed in the lives of these people even before they believed in Him.

Jesus’ Word continues to be powerful in our lives too. It forgives our sins. It calms our troubled hearts. His Word from the right hand of the Father also delivers us from evil and sends new blessings down. A year ago when my father was in the hospital the words of our sermon hymn kept going through my head, especially that last verse,

My God has all things in His keeping; He is the ever faithful friend.
He gives me laughter after weeping, And all His ways in blessings end.
His love endures eternally. What pleases God, that pleases me.

What Jesus did for the widow of Nain is a picture of what will happen on the last day of which is says in Rev. 21:4, “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” Death will simply be the last enemy for the Christian to conquer before our Lord gives us the eternal victory in Heaven.

No matter if you are a part of the crowd that is rejoicing in the help that the Lord has just given you or if you are a part of a grieving crowd, know that our Lord will meet you with His relief, a relief that comes from His heart, His touch, and His Word. Keep your eyes focused on Him, and He will meet you and bring His forgiveness, salvation, and everlasting life. Just like the people of Nain, you will be able to confess that God has come to help His people.

Amen.

*Pastor Don Hougard
Benediction Lutheran Church
Milwaukee, WI
June 7, 2013*