

Luke 7:11-17 With Jesus, We Have Nothing to Fear! Pentecost 3, June 5, 2016

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Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and from our compassionate Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

God's Word to take away all fear and sadness is written in Luke 7:11-17

These are Your words heavenly Father, to give us confidence in Christ our Lord to save us. Your Word....

Dear Christian Friends,

Nain was a small village on a hill. The word Nain means beautiful or lovely. But the day that Jesus arrived there from His travels, the town was anything but beautiful. There was a funeral procession coming out of town with a large crowd following the bier or stretcher on which lay the body of a young man. He was an only child and his mother was a widow. Death, the repulsive king of terror and no respecter of persons, had claimed another victim. What about the widow? There was no steady work for her to do in the village. There was no hope for a future family. Death had taken her husband and then her son. For the widow, the future offered uncertainty, poverty, loneliness, sadness, and fear. But that all changed when Jesus came to the village as the compassionate Lord of life! He has made the difference for us, too.

With Jesus, we have nothing to fear!

First, Jesus cares about us! If we were in the place of this widow, with her son's body being carried out for burial, wouldn't we wonder if God cared about us? It must have seemed to the widow that God was angry with her or didn't know about her needs or couldn't help her. Yes, she was a sinner who had no right to claim anything from God. But she was also a child of God by His Old Testament covenant. She knew God's promise in *Psalms 68:5*: "[God is] a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows...." So, why would He let both her husband and her only child die? Who would care for her as she aged? Why didn't God let her die and spare her son's life? These questions must have run through her mind repeatedly. But, there seemed to be no answer.

How often haven't we asked: "Lord, what is Your purpose in allowing trouble or pain in life? Why do You let us make bad decisions? Couldn't You stop us from making mistakes or from getting in trouble? Why do we suffer? God, do You care? Do You want to see us sad?" Jesus knows our needs before we pray. He does care. In the lesson it states, "*When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her...*" (v.13) The word for his heart going out to her is only used for God the Father and of Jesus. Jesus ached with sympathy when He saw this sad woman. He was moved with compassion for her and was determined to comfort her when no one else could!

The Lord cares for us, too. It states in *Psalms 103*, "[He] redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion.... [Note that He allows you to be in the pit before He shows His compassion and rescues you!] "*As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass... the wind blows... and it is gone.... But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD's love is with those who fear him.*" (103:4, 13-17)

How do we know that God cares for us when He lets us suffer or have problems? Let's look at another grieving mother who was likely a widow, as she sat at the foot of the cross and watched her son die. Jesus' heart went out to her, too and He had John care for her as his mother. But, more importantly, Jesus provided for Mary in a greater way. He lived a sinless life that Mary or any other person could not do.

Everyone else died because of sin. Jesus proved His love for us by willingly giving up His perfect life to pay for all sins. He did this so that Mary, or the widow and her son or any of us who believe in Him as the Savior will have eternal life! So, rather have fear when we have problems or even face death; we are confident! The Bible states, *“Since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. And... let us approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* (Hebrews 4:14-16) In His grace, Jesus helped the widow whose son had died before she asked. Jesus said to her, *“Don’t cry.”* (v.13) His powerful words helped her stop crying. When a young child gets cut, the parent will put a Band-aid on it to “make it better.” Jesus wasn’t dealing with a cut, but the sting of death! Only He could stop this hurt!

Second, Jesus provided the only help! It states, *“He went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk....”* (v.14-15) There was a narrow entrance into Nain. Jesus was walking into the city and the funeral procession was coming out. Both got to gate at the same time and one would have to give way to the other. Jesus won the victory over death. The man’s life was restored. Nothing is impossible for Christ to accomplish!

That happened a long time ago. So, how does this miracle affect us today? Someday, unless the Lord returns, we will face death looking for us. We can pray that God will extend our lives. But in time, the power of sin will make our bodies give way to death. Yet, because of Christ, death will only be temporary.

During Jesus’ ministry, His raising this son from death was only temporary. And He couldn’t keep running all over the world constantly bringing people back to life to reunite families together. He needed to make a permanent solution. On the cross Jesus confronted death once and for all. It could not run or hide from the sinless Savior. When Jesus gave up His life, He defeated the power of death for all! God raised Jesus from death as living proof of our salvation. He is the living Lord of all and He promised that on the Last Day He will raise all the dead. *“A time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out...”* (John 5:28-29) *“For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”* (1 Corinthians 15:52)

We read in our lesson that *“Jesus gave [the young man] back to his mother.”* (v.15) What a dramatic change for her: from deepest sorrow to greatest joy! The scene at the end of the world will be more joyful. Believing families will be reunited, parents, children, and grandparents – all together in Christ. The Bible states, *“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.”* (Revelation 21:4) What a happy reunion we’ll have forever!

So, we have no need to fear and every reason to trust in Jesus. The Holy Spirit has called us to faith in Jesus through His Word and baptism and He will strengthen our faith with in Holy Communion. May none of us ever leave His truth or stand in the way of anyone else receiving His comforting message and blessings!

Since Jesus defeated our enemy - death, we can be sure that He will help us with any problem. At times He will allow our faith to be tested like the widow’s. But, Jesus is always with us! He cares and will provide a way to help either during our lives or in heaven. God will work everything out for the good of those who believe in Him. The crowd was amazed and said, *“God has come to help His people!”* (v.16) We, too, can say that of Jesus for us! As we trust in Him, we know that nothing will stand against God’s loving plans for us. Even though we can’t have Jesus’ depth of compassion, we can still love and have compassion for one another and remind them in Jesus: *“Don’t cry! Don’t fear! Trust in Him!”* Amen.