

"Listen to Jesus Speak Words of Hope"

Luke 7:11-17

We've had some fun sharing some of our humorous stories about our mothers and grandmothers and it's good to laugh, and some days we need to laugh because being a mother has days where there is little to laugh about. And you need encouragement and someone to offer you words of hope when life is so busy or you're dealing with worry or pain for your children.

This morning we find ourselves in Luke 7:11-17, one of the saddest events of life that Jesus would encounter. The death of a child; the only child; the only son; which was preceded by the death of his father. Jesus encounters the burial procession of the widow of Nain who now has to bury her only child, her son.

God and Jesus have a special place in their hearts for widows and orphans because there are many verses in the Bible that command for their protection. The widow of Nain has now lost her sole means of support. Since her husband died it would have been the son's responsibility to provide for his mother. Now she has nothing. There were few opportunities for a woman to work and being a single or widowed woman created its own difficulties (read the Book of Ruth for that).

But Jesus comes unannounced, uninvited and speaks words of hope and then changes her life. Maybe this morning behind the laughter we've shared you're hurting, you feel alone or you feel like there's no hope where you're at or someone you know feels like that. I pray that as we listen to Jesus once again we'll be encouraged or be able to encourage someone who feels they are in a hopeless situation.

V. 11 begins 'Soon afterward'. Soon after what? In vv. 1-10 Jesus healed a Roman centurion's servant who was on his death bed. This Roman centurion was a God-fearer and won the respect of the Jews in Capernaum. He had even contributed financially to building the synagogue there (the ruins of which are still there today). Capernaum was Jesus' home base and also the hometown of Peter and Andrew.

The centurion expressed remarkable faith in Jesus for he told Jesus He need not go to his house to heal his servant. Because he believed if Jesus can heal someone without touching them He doesn't need to even be there. And, he was sensitive to Jewish laws that forbade a Jew from entering a Gentile's house. Jesus remarked about his amazing faith and healed his servant.

Jesus leaves Capernaum and travels southwest, along a well-beaten road that still exists today as a major highway. 20 miles along they come to the small village of Nain, just off the road along the side of a hill. Nain is only 6 miles southeast of Nazareth. Jesus probably knew the place, probably had visited there with His family at some point. Did he know the lady? Maybe, we don't know. There's no indication of any recognition. There's no talk of faith or asking for Jesus' help at all. Jesus 'just happens' to arrive at the city gate while this funeral procession is leaving the city gate to bury her son outside the city; graveyards of which still exist today. But here's the first thing we need to remember when we're down and hurting;

Jesus Always Knows When We Need His Help
(7:11-13a)

This meeting is no coincidence. Even when there's no recorded cry for help, I think as a Jewish community who follow the Mosaic Law, there were the prayers of the people. Most likely the prayers have stopped because with the death of the son, how can one find hope? With Jesus there's always hope. But where was God, some surely said or thought. Jesus knew.

He knows everything about us (v.11)

The road that leads to Nain did not lead to any major city. Ironically it joins with 3 other roads that all lead to Megiddo, a large flat plain of land that has been fought over for centuries and will be the final location of the world's greatest battle, but the road itself was a crossroad to get to somewhere else. So Nain was not on a major route. It wasn't a place well known. It is not mentioned any other time in Scripture and as far as we know this was the only time Jesus ministered there. The only thing important about Nain was the people there and that's why Jesus went.

A lot of people don't know where our towns are. None of us live on major routes. Like the road through Nain we live on feeder roads. People pass through Westport because they are heading to Perth or Kingston. People pass through Newboro to get to highway 15 or they are heading to Westport or towards Brockville. People pass by Elgin on their way to Smiths Falls or Kingston. In the grand scheme of Canadian life, we are not very important or play a prominent role, yet, Jesus knows we live here – and that's the most important thing. He knows everything about us even if no else knows anything about us.

Jesus knows about the widow, her loss, her pain as He knows about all of our losses and pain. He knows everything which means we can tell Him everything and anything. And as much as we think Jesus and God's timing are 'off' sometimes, on the contrary,

His timing is always perfect (v.12)

He just happens to be coming through Nain into the town gate just as the funeral procession is exiting the town gate. This is no coincidence. Jesus had been in Capernaum a few days before. It was a 25-mile walk to Nain so with a large crowd it would have taken 2, probably 3 days. God orchestrated the details of Jesus' arrival at the same time as the funeral is heading out. How does God do that? How often haven't we marvelled at God's timing? We experienced something specific at a certain time that involved other events having to happen exactly when they did so that when we met it was amazing. There's no other explanation other than God.

But you might be thinking, how can we call this perfect timing if Jesus comes after the son has died? Why didn't He come before and prevent his death and spare the painful scene we have here? Isn't this what Mary and Martha said to Jesus who arrived 4 days late after Lazarus died? 'If only you had been here . . .' Its easy to think that God and Jesus don't care when things go wrong but if God and Jesus are perfect than they always have a reason for our struggles and problems. We know He cares because it says in v.13,

¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

Some translations say 'He was moved with compassion'. Or His heart went out to her. When we're struggling or find ourselves in difficult situations Jesus knows. He knows where we live. He cares.

He is full of compassion for us (v.13a)

We have to believe that during life's difficulties or we won't get through them. *'Cast all your cares on Him for He cares for you'* (1 Pet. 5:7). He is with us, He never forsakes us. *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff comfort me"* (Ps. 23:4). We have to have verses like these memorized for the difficult times in life to reassure us of His presence and listen to Him; listen to what He says in His Word.

Jesus, moved with compassion speaks and He says to the grieving, now childless and probably hopeless widow and

Jesus Assures Her of His Power and Presence **(7:13b-15)**

By saying *'Don't cry'*. The word for cry here is wailing, usually when death has occurred. In Luke 8:52 Jesus will say to the women who were wailing at the death of Jairus' daughter *'Stop wailing!'* (8:52). When we tell people or our children when they are hurt and crying *'Don't cry'* we usually follow that with a reassurance of our presence and care. We can offer words of hope through the word of God but we often don't have the power to change the situation. For Jesus to stop this woman, who customarily would walk at the head of the procession, and tell her not to cry must mean He has the power to do something about it. When Jesus speaks reassuring words to us, they are not empty,

His words bring hope (v.13b)

This is why we need to offer the Word of hope to those who are hurting and discouraged. Jesus is everyone's greatest hope. Unbelievers need to know there is hope in life and beyond. They need to know they have purpose and are valued. Only a relationship with Jesus Christ can give you that. When we realize that God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to die for our sins so that, by faith, we can have forgiveness of sins and eternal life, we understand we have purpose and value. Not as the world defines purpose and value based on position, intelligence, wealth or skills but on simply who we are as a person. That's why Jesus goes to nondescript Nain to show a hopeless woman God values her and has purpose in His eyes.

When Jesus says *'Don't cry'* He is offering her hope. He is saying *'I can do something for you'*.

¹⁴ Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still.

Of course they stood still. He just came in contact with a dead person. He did what no one even thinks of doing, stopping a funeral procession. But sin and death have no power over Jesus. Jesus is light and life and so when Jesus speaks,

His words bring life (vv.14-15)

He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

'Young man' means one who is in his mid to late teens. He was old enough to work and to begin to think of marriage and family. His death means no support and no continuation of his father's name. But Jesus speaks words of life and says to the dead teen, *'I say to you, get up!'* I say to you, meaning I who have authority and the power to do this, command you to get up. *"And the dead man sat up and began to talk"*. There is irony there because dead people don't sit up and talk. The boy

was given his life back and would live to be a man and probably have children and eventually out live his mother and eventually die again. Jesus only did this 3 times in His ministry. I'm sure many people wished He would have done it more often but Jesus didn't come to give us more physical life, he came to give us eternal life; hope beyond this life for an eternity with Him in perfection and beauty. Jesus speaks words of eternal life. When He invites us to drink of the water that He offers which will result in satisfying thirst, He means faith in Him. When he invites us to come to Me all you who are weary and heavy laden He provides rest for our souls; peace with God through faith in Him. When Jesus says I have come that you would have life and have it to the full (John 10:10) He's not talking about old age and good health, he's talking about inner peace and eternal satisfaction that we can know is ours even when we go through life's difficulties.

So then why did Jesus help her and why after her son died?

Jesus Helps us for His Glory and our Growth **(7:16-17)**

Had Jesus chose to heal the young man weeks before, how many people would have witnessed it? A few and then it wouldn't have been as obvious that God was involved. Jesus chose to raise the young man from the dead n front of these two converging crowds who were *"all filled with awe and praised God! Saying 'A great prophet has appeared among us'; and God has come to help His people"*. This miraculous sign was not just for the woman and her son. The people said God has appeared to us; He has come to help us! Everything God and Jesus do for us is for us to remember,

Everything is from, through and for Him (v. 16; Rom. 11:36)

"For from Him and through Him and for Him are all things, to Him be the glory forever and ever, amen." God was glorified through this sign. The people gave credit and glory to God because what happened had to be of God. It was reminiscent of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, both of whom brought back to life young men. It was to encourage a jailed and discouraged John the Baptist in the next section who wanted to know if Jesus was the One, and Jesus answered by saying 'Tell John what you have seen and heard,

The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

The reason Jesus came the day of the funeral was so that both crowds would know beyond a doubt that Jesus was the Messiah sent from God. Jesus came with a large crowd. The funeral procession had a large crowd. As difficult as it was for the woman to go through this, Jesus brought about a great miracle that resulted in greater glory for God.

We don't always understand why we go through the things we go through, but there are always two things God is actively doing which we can apply to our struggles. God is seeking for ways to glorify Himself in our life. We all experience difficulties in life. No one is immune to them. But for the believer we can know that God wants to glorify Himself through them somehow. That helps us pray. *'Lord, I'm hurting right now and I don't know how this is going to work out but I am trusting You to see me through this and help me to see how You're going to glorify Ypurself in this.'*

The other thing God is always committed to in our difficulties is to help us grow spiritually. These people had an opportunity to hear and see Jesus at work meeting the woman's needs and bringing life to the son. God and Jesus are always speaking through creation, life's circumstances

and the Word. We need to listen to Him speak to us in his Word during life's difficulties because that's where we renew our hope. Listen to Jesus, hear words of hope.

And when we see Him work in our life and hear His words that help us and speak hope to us,

Go and tell others (v.17)

17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

How? Through the two large crowds that bore witness to the work of Jesus in the woman and son's life. This is a real simple formula to follow for life. Listen to Jesus speak in His Word. Watch Jesus work around us. Tell others how Jesus has changed our life. Listen, watch, tell.

The difficulties in life draw us to God. In them we call for God to help. While we're waiting on God to work and meet our needs we listen to Him through his Word. The more we pray the more prepared we'll be to see Him work. And then we can tell others how God meets our needs and gives us hope.

If you're not facing any difficulties in life right now, praise the Lord for those times when life is good and relatively trial free. Keep listening to Him and watching for where He's working and for those who need His help. We can be the means through whom Jesus's words of hope come to others as we share what we know and what we've experienced.

If you are going through a difficulty or especially if you're a mom whose hurting over your children, listen to Jesus speak words of hope; 'Don't cry' because He is powerful enough to speak life into death. In Jesus, God has come to help His people.

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If you have any comments or questions about this message please contact us
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