

**June 13, 2010**  
**Pentecost 3**

*"The Lord of Life Overcomes Death on the Road to Nain"*

---

**LUKE 7:11-17**

---

**S**oon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. <sup>12</sup> As 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. <sup>13</sup> When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." <sup>14</sup> Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" <sup>15</sup> The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. <sup>16</sup> They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." <sup>17</sup> This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

Today we see a huge collision. I am not talking about a head on collision between a car and a truck on the freeway. I am not talking about two star players in the World Cup colliding on the soccer field. I am not talking about protons and neutrons smashing together in a super collider buried underneath the Swiss Alps. I am talking about the collision between Jesus the Lord of life and grim death as it comes out of the town of Nain.

A large number of Jesus' disciples and a large crowd of people are walking with Jesus as he approaches the town of Nain. Some are eager to hear Jesus talk more about the kingdom of God. Some want to see miracles, maybe even some free food. Some are just plain curious, the gawkers and onlookers. The crowd coming out of Nain is made up of people with solemn faces and tears in their eyes. They are mourning the loss of a young man who has just died, the only son of a widow.

When these two crowds of people come together there will be a huge collision when life meets death face to face. Jesus will be victorious over death and both crowds of people will go home saying, "Wow, we have never seen anything like this." Stupendous. Spectacular. Marvelous. Wonderful. Amazing. These are all words we can use to describe the resurrection to life that we have in Jesus our Savior.

**Jesus showed compassion in the face of death**

What impresses us is the compassion and understanding that Jesus shows to the people who are bringing out this body of a young man to bury it in the ground. Look again at the crowd of people who follow Jesus. "Soon afterward, Jesus went into the town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him." They are so vibrant, full of life, eager to hear and see something new from Jesus. See the people still following Jesus today on this beautiful summer morning as they gather together for worship. There are smiles on their faces, so full of life, and so eager to serve the Lord with gladness. Psalm 100 encourages us to "Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs."

How different the people who were coming out of Nain. "As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out-the only son of a mother and she was widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her." You cannot read this account with out being moved by this scene of death. How different is the funeral procession for a ninety year old man compared to that of a young man cut down by death in the prime of life. Furthermore this young man was the only son of a widow. He should be there to comfort and help his mother after the loss of his father. Instead his lifeless body is lying on a coffin, most likely a wicker basket, carried on the shoulders of men from the town, ready to be buried in the ground.

It says that a large crowd of people came out of the town. They loved this boy and they loved his mom. When my cousin Kathy died in a tragic car accident in Glacier National Park the large crowd of people that gathered together that day were wondering why the Lord would take her life at such a young age. Have you ever been to the funeral of young person who has died? Then you know some of the sadness that was there in these people. What do you say to this poor widow at such a time of grieving? Somehow the words, "I am sorry for your loss" seem so inadequate. Maybe we just need to be there as these people were in large numbers to support the family with our presence, our love and our prayers.

What about Jesus? It says, "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her." Jesus had compassion on her. He cared about her. His heart was filled with sorrow and sadness because of her loss. Jesus always cares about us. "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows but Jesus." "What a Friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and grief's to bear." In the Psalms we hear Jesus our Lord and God say to us, "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."

Are you familiar with the shortest verse in the Bible? It is John 11:35. It is only two words. "Jesus wept." When Jesus saw his dear friend Mary weeping for her brother Lazarus, and the other people with her also weeping, "He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled." When death comes it carries a sting for those who die, but also for those who experience the loss of someone they love. Jesus cares about us at such important moments of mourning, more than any other person who offers us their concern and prayers and cards and kind words.

### **Jesus shows his power over death**

Are you ready to see this huge collision between life and death as Jesus steps forward to show us his victory over death? He tells the grieving mother, "Don't cry." That's one thing we don't say to people who have lost someone they love. We don't say to them, "Don't cry" because they have every right to cry and express their feelings over their loss. God never intended death in the original world that he created. Jesus can tell this woman not to cry because he is going to bring tremendous joy into her life by raising her son back to life again. This is the first time the gospel of Luke calls Jesus Lord. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her. Jesus is Lord. He is God. He breathed into Adam the breath of life. He has the power to raise people to life again on the last day.

Jesus went up to the coffin and touched it. Those who carried the coffin stood still. Jesus did not come to a live body to heal it. He came to a dead body to raise it to life again. Oh, if the man being carried by friends was blind, or paralyzed, or covered with leprosy, can't you see the crowd

pushing in close to watch Jesus perform the miracle. They would press in close to be there, right there when the eyes are opened, or the ears hear for the first time, or the lame man leaps up and jumps and runs around for the first time in his life. Why is Jesus touching the coffin and stopping the funeral procession? What is he going to do with a dead body?

Jesus steps in front of the dead body and says, "Young man I say to you, get up!" Why would anyone talk to a dead body? You can speak to a dead body and the ear drums do not vibrate, and the little bones in the middle ear do not move, and the fluid in the inner ear does not move around to activate the tiny hair like strands that pick up the sound sensations. The nerves cannot carry the sounds to the brain, and the brain of a dead man cannot interpret the sounds. Under normal circumstances this would be true. But these are not normal circumstances. This is Jesus talking. His words are so powerful they can immediately bring life to a dead body. Think of it. Everything happened so fast that the words of Jesus not only created life, they were also heard by the man who had been made alive. Life to the ear drum, life to the middle ear, life to inner ear, life to the nerves, life to the brain, life to the heart, life to the legs, life to the eyes. It all happened so quickly. So it will be in the resurrection on the last day. We will be changed, "In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye."

"The dead man sat up and began talking." It says that he sat up. The word for resurrection literally means to stand again. It didn't take long for the man to sit up and then stand up. He began to talk. If that were me, I know what the first words would be from my mouth. I would look at my astonished mother and say, "Mom, I love you."

Jesus gave this young man back to his mother. Jesus will give our loved ones who died believing in him back to us again on the last day. Listen to these amazing words from 1 Thessalonians 4: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him....For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first." The Lord will bring us together again on the last day with a bodily resurrection. What a joyful reunion that will be. Remember being away from home for a long time, and then coming home to the warm embrace of Mom and Dad. Think of what it will be like on the last day when we are raised to life again by Jesus.

How did the people respond to what they saw that day? "They were all filled with awe and praised God." But then it says with sadness that some of the people said, "A great prophet has appeared among us." And God has come to help his people." Was Jesus only a prophet similar to the prophet Elijah who also raised a young man from the dead? There will always be those who refused stubbornly to accept Jesus as Lord and God. What a blessing it is to confess with Thomas who saw the nail marks in Jesus' hands, "My Lord and my God." No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Death will come to all of us someday. How afraid we would be of death if it were not for Jesus. If it is up to me to find a way to make up for my terrible sins of this past week, then I am hopelessly lost. The Lord our God tells us through the prophet Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" Then the Lord goes on to say, "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve." When the Lord searches my heart and my mind without Jesus there is no hope for me on the last day or for you. When he searches the heart and mine with Jesus he sees nothing but the perfect life and perfect death of Jesus in your account. That is why we look forward to that tremendous collision that will take place on the last day when Jesus will overcome death and raise us to life again and bring us back to the people who have died believing in him. Amen.