

“He Gives Life to the Dead”
(Luke 7:11-17)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

This morning,

We saw the importance of faith:

The centurion believed

That Jesus could heal his servant,

By just speaking the word

Because he believed

Jesus had authority over sickness –

And he wasn't disappointed:

Jesus spoke,

And his servant was healed –

But he wouldn't have been

If the centurion hadn't believed.

Faith is important

Because faith is what unites us to Jesus,

Gives us all that belongs to Him,

And justifies us by His righteousness.

But faith is also important

Because it's the only way

We receive anything from God –

We must believe He is trustworthy –

That He will do all He says.

B. Preview.

This evening,
We're going to look behind the scenes
To what must happen to us
Before we can have (saving) faith:
We must be raised from spiritual death to life –

II. Sermon.

A. Luke goes on to tell us,

That after healing the centurion's servant
Jesus went to the city of Nain –
About 25 miles southwest of Capernaum.

Nain must have been a nice place to live or to visit,
Because the name means “lovely” or “green pastures” –
Green pastures would be lovely/inviting
In an agrarian society –

He was traveling with His disciples,
And a large crowd was following Him –
The Father made sure they were there
That they might witness what Jesus was about to do.

As He came near the city gates,
He ran into a funeral procession:
A dead man was being carried out,
Followed by his mother –

This woman had already lost her husband –
Her primary means of support –

She was a widow –

And now she was bereft of the only other person

That would care for her: her son –

We should assume that –

Unlike Naomi,

Who left Jerusalem with her husband and two sons,

And returned with only her daughter-in-law, Ruth –

That this woman had no daughters –

She was alone.

Plummer, the Biblical commentator, tells us,

The mourning of a widow for an only son was the extremity of grief.

And we read in the Easton Bible Dictionary,

“The death of a widow’s only son

Was the greatest misfortune conceivable.”

The fact that a large crowd was following her

Meant that the city was moved by her loss.

But so was Jesus:

When He saw her,

His heart immediately went out to her:

He felt compassion –

Jesus uses the same word

To describe what the Samaritan felt

When he saw the wounded Jew by the side of the road –

He was moved with pity;
He entered into her sufferings,
And He determined to do something about this –

We were reminded this morning
Of what Jesus said in John 3:16,
“For God so loved the world
That He gave His only begotten Son . . .”
God’s love/compassion moved Him
To give what was most precious to Him
That He might save us from certain death.

Jesus came into the world –
Moved by the same compassion –
To carry out His plan.

And now, He comes to this woman
With the same compassion to relieve her suffering.

First, He to stop weeping.
The reason why she shouldn’t wasn’t yet clear,
But it would be in a few moments.

He then put out His hand
And touched the coffin,
So that the procession stopped.

This wasn’t the kind of coffin
We’re familiar with in our culture –

A wooden box with a lid,
In which a body was laid to rest –

It was more of a stretcher,
Or plank of wood,
Used to carry a corpse
To the place of its burial –

After the procession came to halt,
Jesus said, “Young man, I say to you, arise!” –
And he “sat up and began to speak”
And He “gave him back to his mother” (v. 15) –
Jesus has authority over death.

When those who were following
Saw the dead man sit up,
They responded as we might today:
“Fear gripped them” –
They were terrified –

But then they began glorifying God
Because they realized He had sent
A great prophet among them –
Like one of the prophets of old:
Able to do great miracles –
God had visited them in mercy –
Particularly, to this poor widow.

They began telling everyone what they had seen,
 And it wasn't long before all Judea heard –
 That's why the Lord shows us His mercy,
 So that we can tell others.

B. Let's notice a few things about this event:

1. The first is that Jesus could do miracles.

Miracles are supernatural events –
 Something that is above nature,
 That doesn't happen every day;
 That goes against the norm –
 Against the way the Lord usually works.

Shadows always move steadily in one direction:

When they go the other way –
 As they did in the case of Hezekiah:
 When he asked that the shadow
 Go up his steps, rather than down,
 So that he would know
 The Lord had heard
 And answered his prayer for healing (2 Kings 20:10) –
 That's a miracle –

When you break a loaf of bread
 And give away the pieces,
 The loaf gets smaller;
 You don't have more bread left over

Than what you had to begin with –

When you do,

That's a miracle (Matt. 14:20).

Jesus could do miracles:

He raised a dead man to life.

2. The second is that miracles prove

That the one doing them was sent from God.

It's true there was such a thing

As false signs and lying wonders –

When the devil would try to deceive

God's people into disobeying Him –

But they were *false* signs and *lying* wonders:

Not true miracles –

He can make something look miraculous

By working behind the scenes,

But he can't overcome the laws God has put into effect.

How could those who saw the "miracle"

Know which they were looking at?

If the prophet who did the sign

Contradicted God's Word,

Then he was false –

God is always true to His Word –

And so are His messengers –

Which is why we should
Always compare what we see and hear
With what God tells us.

3. Third, miracles were meant to stop traffic.

Those who saw shadows
Move in the opposite direction,
Loaves of bread multiply,
Storms cease,
Lepers cleansed,
Sickness healed,
Someone who was dead
Sit up in their coffin –
It had a dramatic effect:
It created fear and dread –

Those who saw what Jesus did
Were riveted –
They paid attention.

When God terrifies,
We pay attention:
Solomon writes,
“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7).

As we were reminded this morning,
If we don't fear the Lord,
We won't listen to Him –

4. Fourth, Jesus' miracles were always compassionate.

When He wanted His audience to listen,

He didn't cause earthquakes,

Or thunderstorms,

He didn't make mountains move,

Open chasms under their feet,

Or rain down fire from heaven:

He healed the sick,

Opened the eyes of the blind,

Made the lame walk,

The deaf hear,

Fed multitudes with bread,

Cast out demons,

And raised the dead to life.

This was the time when God was revealing His mercy –

His compassion –

Not so much His justice

As He often did in the OT –

Though He would be perfectly just in doing either.

That's because

Jesus is the revelation of God's love and mercy –

That's what we're to be sharing with others

During this time of His grace –

We need to remember

That the time of His justice is also coming –

Which is why He wants us to warn them as well.

5. Finally, the miracles Jesus did in the physical realm

Were often pictures of what He could do in the spiritual.

When He made the blind see,

He was showing us

That He could give us the ability to see

What we can't see by nature: God's glory.

When He made the deaf hear,

That He could open our ears

To hear and obey what God says.

When He cleansed the lepers,

That He could take away

The filth and rottenness of our guilt.

And when He raised the dead,

That He can raise our souls to life –

Which gives us all these blessings.

When Jesus raised the widow's son,

He reunited/reconnected his soul with his body.

When He raises us spiritually,

He reunites our souls with His Spirit.

God originally made us
To be the habitation of His Spirit –

When He created Adam,
He made him innocent and pure,
And gave him the desire to love and obey
Through the presence of His Spirit.

When Adam sinned,
He lost the Spirit
Not only for himself,
But for us as well.

But the Second Adam,
Through His obedience,
Regained the Spirit
That He might make us alive.

Jesus says in John 5:21,

“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.”

The reason we’re here this evening –
That we’ve trusted Jesus,
And have become His worshipers –
Isn’t because we’re smarter or better than others:
It’s because the Father and the Son
Send the Spirit to make us alive.

More often than not,

The Lord saves and uses those

Who are lesser in the world's eyes,

That He might glorify His mercy:

Paul, "For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD"" (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

We also need to remember this

When it comes to saving others –

Our family, friends and neighbors

Aren't going to find Jesus by themselves –

We need to bring the Gospel to them:

But Jesus must also call them –

He must send His Spirit to raise them to life.

Let's continually look to Him that He might. Amen.

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