

Sermon Series: Spurred on to Holiness (and Power) by Immersing Ourselves into the Life of Christ Through the Eyes of the Apostles – A Harmony of All Four Gospels

Sermon Title: “The Life-Giving Word of Christ in a Hurting World” from Luke 7:11-17

June 23, 2019

Today’s Scripture: Luke 7:11–17 Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country. (ESV)

Series Theme verse: Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. (ESV)

Introduction: Imagine your life ladies if your husband had died prematurely with no life insurance and you had no skills whatsoever to market to make a living except as a cashier making minimum wage at Target or WalMart. Imagine that there was no such thing as Social Security to assist you in your later years and now imagine that your only child whom you had put all of your trust in to feed you, clothe you, house you, and keep you company just died of a heart attack at the age of 25. There is no church to turn to, no extended family to take you in, now what do you think life will be like for you from age 60-95?

Main point: Jesus has divine compassion for all, including the most marginalized in society and has provided his own presence through the church today to be the support widows and orphans need to survive/thrive.

Context:

Exegesis

Splagxna = bowels of compassion

1. The life of a New Testament childless widow was filled with hardships and suffering.
 - Financial hardship. If she entered the marriage with no dowry (or a very small one) she had no means of financial support. Imagine living today without Social Security, no home (since the property and land belonged to the man’s extended family), no means of income, no children to take you in a feed you. She would

have to become a beggar living on the streets.

- Cultural ostracism. The term widow meant more than just a woman whose husband had died, it carried the connotation of one living in poverty. Imagine how you must feel living (if you can call it that) in a culture where wealth was considered a sign of God's blessing and approval. The locals must have thought she was especially cursed (think hidden sins) because God took her husband away prematurely and then took her son away as well. After the funeral service and burial she would have been forgotten by many and ignored. Somewhat on the same level as a leper.
- If she had children, then it might have been possible, if they were old enough, for them to help get the crops in and work the farm and hang on just barely enough to survive, but often,
- If the husband had debts, the creditors would often come and take the land away from her in order to settle the debts and cause her to be homeless and landless.
- If she was childless then perhaps she could find a relative of her husband, usually a brother-in-law, who would take her in and marry her, even though he was already married in order for her to have children through the redeemer (think Ruth and Boaz, think Judah and Tamar) but this seemed to be rare.
 1. Deuteronomy 25:5–10 “If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.’ Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, ‘I do not wish to take her,’ then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.’ And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.’ (ESV)
 2. The taking off of the shoe and spitting in the face of the brother is known as a “halitzah” (meaning taking off of the shoe) and was the preferred mode in later times and in the U.S. where our laws forbid polygamy. The Talmud preferred the Halitzah (imagine that, a book written by men promoting a policy that favors men and disfavors women).
- God through the Old Testament provided a safety net for widows which

included:

1. She could glean in the fields (as Ruth did) (Deuteronomy 24:19-21)
 2. She was to receive a portion of the tithes Deuteronomy 14:28–29
“At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. (ESV)
 3. She was to be invited to all the main religious feasts and given food from a tithe Deuteronomy 16:9-15 and,
 4. Her garment could not be taken as collateral for a loan Deut. 24:17. But
- Those laws were not uniformly followed. As the people drifted from God, so did they drift from his law and widows suffered.
2. Out of divine compassion, Jesus provides for the widow’s future by raising her son from the dead. *And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.*
 - Notice that this widow did not need any faith at all for a miracle. Jesus simply did it for her. No doubt she soon became a follower and her son would never be allowed to forget that he came back from the dead to provide a living for himself and her. I wonder if they often joked about this?
 - In many places where poverty is extreme, Jesus is in the business through his servants of raising people up from the dead. See story shared by David Platt.
 - Today, the church is Jesus’ hands providing for widows. Acts 6 is the most obvious, but James tells us that true religion is to visit widows and orphans in their affliction and Paul instructs Timothy that the church today is to provide for widows who are widows indeed, In other words too old to remarry.
 3. It was Jesus’ compassion that moved him to act. The more we care about the hurting around us the more we will be moved to act as well. Prayer cards and door hangers. The odds of the people on your card heading for hell are likely 90%.
 4. The dead corpse being hauled to the grave is an excellent picture of each one of us prior to coming to Christ. Scripture says we were all dead in our trespasses. *Ephesians 2:1–2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the*

course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— (ESV) Ephesians 2:4–5 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (ESV)

- The dead son had no merit. It wasn't like the centurion who had favor with the people. Jesus didn't raise him from the dead because he looked handsome! This is us spiritually. We do our best to preserve dead bodies as long as we can but sooner rather than later they rot in the grave. This is all grace. Hopefully each one of us is aware of God's grace and our unworthiness to receive life from him.
5. It was the power of God's word that raised this son from the dead. This too is a picture of our conversions. We were saved because someone shared God's word and that word convicted us of our sinfulness. *Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (ESV)*
- Steven Cole tells the story of Gaylord Kambarami was the General Secretary of the Bible Society of Zimbabwe. Once when he offered a man a New Testament, the man responded, "If you give me that Bible, I will roll the pages and use them to make cigarettes!" Gaylord replied, "At least promise me that you will read the page before you smoke it." The man agreed, so he gave him the New Testament and went his way. Fifteen years later, Gaylord was attending a convention when the speaker on the platform suddenly spotted him, pointed him out to the audience, and said, "This man doesn't remember me, but 15 years ago he tried to sell me a New Testament. When I refused to buy it he gave it to me, even though I told him I would use the pages to roll cigarettes. He made me promise to read the pages before I smoked them. Well, I smoked Matthew and I smoked Mark and I smoked Luke. But when I got to [John 3:16](#), I couldn't smoke any more. My life was changed from that moment." He had become a full-time evangelist, pointing others to the powerful message of God's Word.¹

Application:

Joy is the only word the can best describe what happens when dead people come to life. There was joy for the mother. Imagine that scene. Joy for the son, he probably had glimpses of Hades and now was drawn back from the abyss. Joy in the heart of Christ since he rescued this soul from an eternal death and gave him back to his mother. And joy in our lives whenever we are instruments of saving someone's soul from death. The Truelife cards and the Biblein11 cards are great tools to use to bring others to Christ. But nothing will bring you greater joy than to see a son, daughter grandson, granddaughter or neighbor of friend come to know Christ because you shared God's life-giving word.

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-30-christ%E2%80%99s-hope-and-power-hurting-world-luke-711-17>