

The Second Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 7:11-17 (NIV)

¹¹Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹²As 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. ¹³When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” ¹⁴Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. ¹⁶They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” ¹⁷This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.



Theme: The Lord’s Love and Compassion for You

A couple of weeks ago in our last Bible Study we looked at the psalms of trust. One thing that I noticed about those psalms is the emphasis on God’s unfailing love (Hebrew chesed) and His compassion for His people. There are several psalms in which these two attitudes of God toward us are linked. In this story we also see God’s love and compassion for all who are in need.

I. There are days when great trouble and sorrow come into our lives.

This woman was in great distress. There was a time when she lost her husband. Now she had lost her only son. As Jesus and his followers were entering the town of Nain, they encountered another large crowd. Much of the town probably came in support of this poor woman, who for the second time in her life was mourning a great loss.

Distress is something that seems to find its way into our world. Wednesday night many of you heard of the near perfect game that a Detroit pitcher threw. It was blown by a bad call by the first base umpire on the last out of the game. The pitcher must have been devastated. But think of the umpire. He quickly conceded that he blew the call. He will forever be known as the umpire who robbed a pitcher of a perfect game. But that is a minor thing compared to some of the stories that we had this week. Thousands of people are affected by the oil that is spilling into the gulf from the gushing well. Even worse yet, there were hundreds of people who died in storms last week in Central America.

Distress not only hits far away. It eventually finds its way into each of our lives. Like the baseball game, there are unfortunate things that disappoint us. There are times of financial uncertainty, times when we struggle with temptation, times when our relations with loved ones are strained; times when we are going through health problems; and times when we mourn and weep as the woman and the entire town did in our text. It often seems as if these troubles and sorrows come in streaks as they did for this woman. As the saying goes, “When it rains, it pours.”

II. Notice both Jesus compassion and His love for this woman.

The Gospels often mention the Lord's compassion. The Greek word, actually means "guts." It is when someone is in need, and it moves us deep inside. I like the NIV translation in this verse. It says, "*When the Lord saw her, His heart went out to her.*" Jesus saw the pain and sorrow that this woman had, and it moved Him deeply. It is also significant that this is the first time in Luke's Gospel that Jesus is called, "The Lord." This is the fulfillment of what Isaiah prophesied, "*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.*" Jesus' heart was moved with compassion and pity for this poor woman, so He walked to her and said, "Don't cry." That seems a little strange. Jesus was possibly moved to tears over the plight of this woman, and He told her not to cry. But He was about to do something that would turn her sorrow into joy.

Jesus has that same compassion for us in every one of our needs. He sees our every need. He knows what it is like to be tempted. He also wept and felt pain as we do. His heart goes out to us in every time of need. He hears our cries in our prayers. In His Word He comforts us by saying, "Do not fear, do not weep." He comforts us with the certainty of His unfailing love.

II. He showed His love in two ways.

First of all He touched the man's coffin. This is significant. According to an Old Testament law (Numbers 5:2-4), by touching the man's coffin, the Lord also became unclean. Not only in His heart, but also by His touch, the Lord took this man's infirmities on Himself. He could have walked by, but Jesus compassion for this man's mother caused Him to stop and give His aid. That touch showed His compassion for this woman in a vivid way.

It was not just chance that Jesus was walking into Nain that day. It was all part of His plan that He could bring His help to that woman in her time of need. The Lord is not here to physically touch us as He did to many people who were considered unclean at the time, but He touches us in other ways. He touches us with His peace in His Sacrament of Holy Communion. Today our confirmands will be receiving the Lord's Supper for the first time. This has been a treasure for Christians throughout the centuries. Christ gives us His own body and blood as the assurance of our salvation. It is often in times of great need and distress that people especially desire to receive this Sacrament. Through it, the Lord touches us with His love. But He also touches us with the compassion of our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are times when we were in distress, and as Jesus happened to be entering Nain as the woman was going to bury her son, so the Lord sends someone to us in our time of need who speaks words of comfort and peace or gives us the embrace that we need at the time. He still touches us with His mercy as He touched that young man's coffin.

Then by His word He raised the young man from the dead. There is something peculiar about this miracle. No one ever asked Jesus for help. Generally someone cries out to Jesus for mercy. But I am sure that this woman didn't even have the strength to ask for a miracle. Her heart was broken. She might have even been angry with God like the widow of Zeraphath in today's Old Testament lesson. There are only two instances in the Gospels, which I can think of, when Jesus healed someone who never asked for His help. They are this story and the blind man whom He healed in John 9. In both cases the work of God was displayed in the lives of these people. Jesus said, "*Young man, I say to you, get up!*" It was like he was waking the young man up from a deep sleep, but Jesus' word was

so powerful that it was able to raise this man from the dead. The man sat up and talked, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. The Lord's love did not fail this woman.

It will never fail any of us either. That is the point of everyone of the confirmation verses that I chose for our confirmands this year.

- Matthew 6:33, *"Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all of these things will be added to you as well."*
- Romans 1;16, *"I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."*
- Romans 8:28, *"In all things God works for the good of those who love Him."*
- John 10:27-28, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand."*

Do you remember your confirmation verse? My guess is that the point of that verse is to encourage you to trust our Lord. I chose those verses to encourage our confirmands this year to trust in the Lord. The Bible tells us that His love never fails. He is with us in every time of need. He forgives all of our sins through Christ. He picks us up when we fall. He defends us from all evil, and in the end, He will bring us safely to His heavenly kingdom.

When we consider our Lord's love and compassion for this poor woman, it gives us confidence in any time of distress in our lives. The Lord will never leave us or forsake us. He promises to meet our distress head on, and to replace our sorrow with His comfort, peace, and joy. May that confidence in God's goodness cause us to be filled with awe and praise God for all the goodness and love, that He brings into our lives.

Amen.

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