

Jesus Raises a Widow's Son from the Dead

(Luke 7:11-17)

Jesus' disciples had already witnessed a number of amazing miracles. Jesus had cast out demons, healed Peter's mother-in-law, cleansed a leper, restored mobility to a paralyzed man, healed a man's shriveled hand, and cured a centurion's servant who was on the brink of death. Now, for the first time in His public ministry, Jesus would bring a dead man back to life. Jesus came to bring life—spiritual life, abundant life, eternal life (compare John 10:10). Jesus demonstrated this life giving power by raising a widow's son from physical death. Jesus still offers life.

**Jesus always seems to show up at
the right place at the right time (7:11-12).**

The village of Nain is mentioned only once in the New Testament. Jesus' arrival at Nain perfectly intersected an encounter with a grieving widow and set the stage for Jesus to raise the widow's son from the dead. He was in exactly the right place at exactly the right time.

The disciples along with a great crowd followed Jesus to a town called Nain (7:11).

Luke states that "next," that is, on the heels of having cured the centurion's servant in Capernaum, Jesus arrived at the village of Nain. Nain was located about twenty miles southwest of Capernaum, about six miles from Nazareth, and about three miles from the village of Shunem. It was in Shunem that the Old Testament prophet Elisha had raised a woman's son from the dead (2 Kings 4:8-37), so Jesus' presence and His miracle of raising the dead to life had special significance in that region. Jesus' disciples were with Him, as was a large crowd of followers.

As Jesus approached Nain He encountered the funeral procession for the only son of a widow (7:12).

Just as Jesus and His crowd of followers arrived at the village gate, another large crowd of people emerged from the village. A widow's son had died, probably that same day. This young man was his mother's only son. His death left her both grieving and destitute. He had probably been the bread winner for the family—the term for "young man" in verse 14 refers to a young adult. As Jesus approached the village, the funeral procession was coming out of the village to the place of burial. The young man's body was, of course, the focal point of attention for this second crowd just as Jesus was the focal point of attention for the crowd following Him. This chance encounter, which was no accident, presented Jesus with an opportunity to show compassion and display His power. By design, Jesus arrived at the right place at the right time.

**Jesus always seems to display genuine
compassion and life giving power (7:13-15).**

Jesus coupled His loving heart with His divine power, reassuring the widow and then raising her son from the dead.

Jesus had compassion on the widow and told her not to weep (7:13).

The progression of Jesus' reaction to the funeral scene in Nain is instructive. He "saw" the widow, He "had compassion" for her, and He "spoke" to her. To see a person, to really see people in their need, is the beginning of compassion. Too often we hurry past the hurting. Jesus, whom Luke here refers to as the Lord in order to once again underscore His divine authority, had compassion on the woman. The word "compassion" refers to a deeply seated emotional response. Jesus cares deeply about those who suffer. Jesus spoke comforting words to the widow. He told her not to weep--words that would be nonsensical in such a situation were it not for what Jesus knew would happen next. Her tears of grief would quickly be turned to tears of joy.

Jesus touched the funeral bier and told the young man to rise (7:14).

Again, Jesus' actions are instructive. He "approached" the funeral procession, He "touched" the bier that held the body of the deceased son, and He "spoke." Jesus made personal contact with the corpse, an act that would render Him ceremonially unclean under normal circumstances (Numbers 19:11). But Jesus didn't hesitate to make contact. He then said to the young man, "Arise!" A miracle was about to take place. A funeral was about to become a reunion.

The dead son sat up and spoke, and Jesus restored him to his mother alive (7:15).

At Jesus' command the young man sat up and began to speak. His life was instantly and miraculously restored! This was the first time Jesus raised the dead to life. He would do so again by raising Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:40-56) and Lazarus (John 11:43). Eventually, Jesus Himself would rise from the dead, proving Himself to be the Son of God. Having raised the widow's son, Jesus then presented the young man to his mother (compare 1 Kings 17:23). Jesus' compassion and power united in a resurrection miracle that day. Jesus is the author of life who offers life to all.

**Jesus always seems to deserve reverent
praise and the spread of His reputation (7:16-17).**

Two distinct crowds witnessed this miracle, the crowd that had followed Jesus to Nain and the crowd that had gathered to mourn the death of the widow's son. That day everyone together recognized in Jesus' act a remarkable revelation of His authority and power.

The people were filled with fear and glorified God (7:16).

Luke states that everyone present was overcome with “fear”—awe or reverence—when they witnessed Jesus’ power to raise the dead. Appropriately, they glorified God for making His power known in their midst. Jesus’ act must have reminded them of Elijah and Elisha, two ancient prophets who also raised the dead by the power of God (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37). The people concluded that God had sent another great prophet. They didn’t yet come to recognize Jesus as more than a prophet. But Jesus is much more than a prophet. He’s God in the flesh.

Word of Jesus’ resurrection power spread throughout the region (7:17).

It would have been impossible to withhold news about a resurrection. Reports about Jesus’ miracle spread throughout Judea and the whole region. Of course, the miracle took place in Galilee, but Judea’s inhabitants soon heard about Jesus’ work. His reputation spread quickly. Later, when Jesus Himself rose from the dead, news likewise spread quickly. His saving death and life giving resurrection is still good news worth sharing with others. Jesus still offers life. Jesus came to bring life—spiritual life, abundant life, eternal life.