

The world around us is full of sorrow. Lately, we have a lot of our church members who have lost a loved one.

In our world, there is sickness, pain, grief, loss, and other troubles.

Where does it all come from? It comes from sin. If there were not sin in the world, there would be no deaths, no funerals, no illnesses, no cares, and no tears.

What is the solution for sin? Jesus' death on the cross and rising again is the solution for sin, and therefore the solution for our grief. We patiently bear with the current state of things, until Jesus comes again to take us all home.

We don't have to wait for Jesus to have compassion for us. Jesus is as compassionate toward us in our losses and pain, as Jesus was in the events we study in Luke chapter 7. The sympathy and love and care of Jesus is still just as strong. Jesus never fails to be concerned about our broken hearts. Christ Jesus heals our hearts now, and one day, He will wipe away all the tears from our eyes.

In our grief, Jesus cares for us.

1. Jesus knows all about our sorrows. (v.11-12)

As the old hymn says – 'Jesus knows all about our struggles.' As we turn to Luke chapter 7, we see the knowledge of Jesus. In the previous passage, Jesus healed the servant of a soldier. Then we get to verse 11, "*Soon afterward, [Jesus] went to a town called Nain, and His disciples and a great crowd went with Him.*"

Jesus Himself was intentionally directing His own ministry. Jesus was constantly asked to take up the ministry of healing, but He kept to His own priority for ministry, which was preaching the gospel, and heading to His cross to save His people.

Notice the context in verse 11 was a great crowd following Jesus. This was the moment of a funeral procession - when a dead person was being carried out of the town gate. It was not a person that anyone was bringing to Jesus to raise the dead, but instead a person they were bringing outside the town to bury.

The name Nain meant green pastures, or lovely. When they first came to Nain, they found it lovely. When Jesus came to Nain, what did He find? The ugliness of death!

This is a picture of the condition in which Jesus found things on the earth. The first Adam had entered the condition of a paradise of the Garden of Eden. But Jesus, the second Adam, entered a beautiful town, but ruined by death, and a beautiful world, ruined by death.

There was a heavy sadness of this particular occasion of grief, as Luke informed us in verse 12, “*As [Jesus] 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.*”

Back in verse 11, we were told that Jesus had a crowd with Himself, and here in verse 12, we are told that the widow had a crowd with her. The two crowds met. Jesus had an enthusiastic and willing crowd following him, and the widow had a grieving crowd following her. Jesus was preaching wonderful things in a lovely town, but what will He do about death?

The loss of her husband and her son would mean that she was now without a provider or protector. The power of the tragedy was not missed by the people of her town of Nain. A considerable crowd felt the pain of her situation, and they had come out that day for the funeral. The mother was compelled to follow the dead body of her son to the burial place, and the whole crowd was helplessly following after her, powerless to change her situation, and powerless to provide comfort and relief. All the crowd could do was join her in this caravan of grief.

That brings us to our second point.

2. Jesus has a heart of compassion of us. (v.13)

v.13, “*...when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’*”

“*Jesus had compassion on her...*” This verb indicates a visceral reaction. That is, His emotional response was so strong and immediate that our Lord Jesus felt physical pain for her. Today we might say Jesus felt sick over her situation. This compassion is typical of Jesus. Jesus is the man of sorrows, and acquainted with our grief.

Hebrews 4:15 says He is able “to sympathize with our weaknesses.”

Jesus counseled her not to cry. Jesus was anointed by God the Father to be the comforter of His people. Isaiah 61:1-3, *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, ...to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning...”*

Jesus was moved with compassion. How moved was He? He was moved enough to take her son’s place in death, and to return her son to her. He was moved enough to substitute Himself. He knew He had entered this world as the Second Adam who would remove sin and therefore remove death. Jesus did not merely have compassion to postpone her tears of today, Jesus had the compassion to wipe away all tears from her eyes.

Jesus knew the pain of a death, you see. Jesus was grieving in the previous passage that the offspring of God, the very people of God in the nation of Israel had died a spiritual death. Back in verse 9, Luke underlined for us that Jesus found great faith in the Gentile soldier, but Jesus could not find such faith in the people of Israel.

3. Jesus has great power to care for us and to accomplish His purpose! (v.14-17)

v.14, *“Then [Jesus] came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And [Jesus] 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.”*

The bier is like a stretcher for carrying a dead person.

Of course the comfort for us in our grief is not that we should expect that God will immediately raise up our loved one again in a miraculous, special resurrection for our benefit, just like this woman received.

The gift of comfort from Christ to us is not that the soul of our loved one returns to the body right now, only to live in this world of sins and sorrows, and then in a little while, to again go through the agony and pain of death a second time.

Rather, the gift of comfort from Christ to us in our grief and loss is the promise and guarantee of the general resurrection of all of us. Consider how Paul wrote the words of comfort in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, “...*the Lord Himself will descend...the dead in Christ will rise first. Then, we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.”*

In our grief, we must remember that all believers who died, are people that we will see again, and we will enjoy being with them again at our Lord’s coming.

The only way to do that is to measuring things by eternity, instead of measuring things by time in this world.

Christ asks us to moderate our sorrows and limit our grief, based on the fact that all believers will rise again.

The New Testament encourages us in our grieving to shift our focus to that soon and coming Day of the Lord. Focus on the future. When we are all grieving, we are to encourage each other with words of the arrival of the Lord Jesus. That is our comfort.

The comment in our passage in Luke 7:15 that Jesus “*gave [the son] to his mother*” reminds us of an incident in the life of the Old Testament prophet Elijah. In 1 Kings 17:17-24, Elijah raised the son of the Shunnamite woman, and gave her to the mother.

The response to the miracle of Elijah was known to Jesus, who knew His Bible. It is recorded for us what the woman said to Elijah in 1 Kings 17:24, “...‘*Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth*.’”

The widow became convinced that Elijah was a prophet, and that he spoke God’s Word. The same is true for the people in response to Jesus raising this man from the dead.

Consider the vast difference between the Old Testament prophets and Jesus. Elijah had to call upon God in prayer, but Jesus spoke a word Himself and raised

the dead. The other prophet Elisha had to repeatedly stretch himself out on the dead child, but Jesus simply spoke His command for life to return, and it was done. Elisha raised someone who then sneezed seven times, but the one Jesus raised, simply sat up and began to speak.

1 Corinthians 15:54,55, *“When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”...”* This is Jesus’ mission in the world – to remove sin, which is the sting of death. Since that stinger is removed, death is now relegated to a different category – death has become only a temporary discomfort. Because of Jesus, death is not a permanent situation.

We see in last two verses of our text (v.16-17), the reaction of the crowd showed that Jesus always accomplishes His greater purpose.

v.16, *“Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has arisen among us!’ and ‘God has visited His people!’”*

“has visited” = to care for with the implication of continuous responsibility, to see to it. Like the example of caring for a family member.

v.17, *“And this report about Him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.”*

Resurrection power resides in Jesus, who is Himself the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus is the Creator – Jesus spoke, and the world came into being. Similarly, Jesus spoke, and the dead were raised. Remember, even the dead son heard Jesus’ voice, and his soul returned to his body. Jesus has complete control over both the realm of the living, and also the realm of the dead.

Jesus uses His power to accomplish His purposes in us.

Concluding Application:

In our grief, we have a choice. Will we look to the past or to the future?

Joseph Bayly wrote a book called “A View from the Hearse.” Here is one story from the book. Joe tells when he met a man who was in his 70’s. During their

first ten minutes of having met each other, the man in his 70's got out his wallet and brought out the faded photograph of a child - his child, who had died almost 50 years before. 50 years of grief. 50 years of carrying that picture. Is that looking to the past or to the future?

We need to look forward, look ahead. Do you know why? Because one day, one fine day very soon, we will all hear the voice of Jesus. Jesus will say, "Get up, it's resurrection morning!"

Pastor John Flavel was a minister of the gospel in the 1600s in England. He lived in turbulent times. And like His Master Jesus, he lived a life acquainted with grief. Both of his parents died of the plague in 1665 under tragic circumstances. After only two years of marriage, his first wife Joanna died in childbirth, along with their first child. Eventually, he remarried, and grieved the loss of his second wife Elizabeth. He remarried a third time to Agnes, and lost her also. He married a fourth time to Dorothy, and she outlived him. Pastor John Flavel focused on the future. He ministered to other people, and preached about grief, and wrote about grief, and blessed people with a Biblical perspective.

The insight that Pastor Flavel shared in his book *Facing Grief*, is that we should limit our sorrows. We weep, but we don't wail. We have sorrow, but not despair. Think about it in terms of the rest of the Christian life. We are to love our spouse, but not worship our spouse. We are to love our children and grandchildren, but not make them the center of our universe. We are to love our parents and grandparents, but within limits. We delight in people, but never as much as we delight in our Savior. We live for Christ, whether we are married or not. We live for Christ, whether we have children or not. We live for Christ, whether we have parents or not.

Same principle comes in grieving. We live for Christ, whether we lost someone or not. We get to decide whether to marry, right? But we don't get to decide how long our spouse lives. God plans that out for us. Listen to how Paul wrote this in 1 Corinthians 7:29-30, "*...the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.*"

The perspective that Christ gives us is that we are soon out of here. Grief is focused on earth. The more we shift our focus to heaven, the more it eases our grief. We can mourn as though we were not mourning. That means we have not actually lost a loved one, because they are not actually dead. They are asleep in Christ, and we are going to see them soon – just as soon as Jesus comes again.

Jesus knows all about our sorrow, He feels new compassion for us every day even for the misery and slavery of our sins. Jesus is powerful enough to change everything, and indeed has already done so. All of our pain, in the hands of the master has been used to work a greater purpose. God gets the glory in our lives as a testimony to the world. Run to Jesus. He is willing and able to help us. He will carry us through.

Please remember that Jesus is moved with compassion by our pain and our need, and He takes action in love to care for us. He remembers tonight what it was like to lose his friend. Jesus wept. Jesus has compassion. And He destroyed death.