

## Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain

### Luke 7:11-17

Bible scholars believe it was the next day after the Sermon on the Mount and the healing of the centurion's servant, that Jesus, His disciples, and a great crowd walked about twenty miles from Capernaum to the city of Nain. There Jesus would bring back to life a young man as an act of mercy for the grieving mother. This is the first of three times Jesus would raise someone from the dead.

“And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and many people. <sup>12</sup> Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and many people of the city was with her.” Luke 7:11-12

#### I. Extreme Misery Felt

“city of Nain” – Nain, meaning “pleasant,” was a walled city about 6 miles southeast of Nazareth and about 20 miles southwest of Capernaum. Google tells us that a man could walk that distance in about 6-8 hours. Nain is only mentioned here within the Scriptures. Today the ruins of the area are extensive, but a large cemetery has been found not far from where the city gate had existed.

“she was a widow” – There are several levels of sorrow in these couple verses.

- In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, you might miss this fact, but she only had **one son**. Sons were a premium at that time and the Bible tells us very plainly this was her only son.
- She was a **widow**. The sad loss of her husband is understandable. Death tearing apart a union of marriage is one of life's greatest griefs. For women at this time, the loss of a husband often meant the loss of all personal support. Very few women had the means to provide for themselves leaving them dependent on others. If fortunate to have older sons, they would take on the responsibility to care for the needs of their mother.
- Her **son** was now **dead**. Her grief, loneliness, and destitute position had just sunk deeper. It was certain she would now lose everything! She was at the lowest point of her life, unimaginable for most of us, a truly extreme crisis – but Jesus saw her!

Two Crowds Meet – One crowd was with Jesus, and the other was with the widow in the funeral procession of her son. Three times within these two verses the word “many” is used to describe the large groups of people converging just outside the city walls. These were two considerable masses who met on the road.

Joyous Crowd – Of course, they were with Jesus and He led their group! Please understand, that joy is the automatic result of being with Christ! Most of them didn't realize it but they were traveling with the Bread of Life, the Light of the world, the Hope of the world, the Resurrection and the Life, the Creator of the universe, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, He was their all in all and they were with Him! It would have been joyous! Yesterday, He had spoken the word and healed a slave, they could not have imagined what would happen that day!

Sorrowful Crowd – Of course, they were in a funeral procession. Our culture holds many funeral traditions – a viewing/visitation; the family solemnly walking in after the casket is closed; the reading of the obituary; singing of traditional religious songs; a slow, lights-on procession to the grave site, and a nice meal provided by the family and church. These are our traditions but the Jewish customs at the time of Christ were very different.

Usually, on the day of the death, the body would be buried. Quickly, a group of “professional mourners” would be hired. An announcer would start the slow walk to the cemetery shouting out the accomplishments and good character of the deceased, followed by the paid mourners crying out and wailing, often they would play on small drums and flutes eerie music of sorrow. Then came the body, carried by four men in a wicker open casket, relatives came next, and in this case, we only read of the grieving mother. It was expected that if a funeral procession came past, out of respect, you would join along. So, by the time the group of mourners reached the outskirts of the city of Nain, the crowd had become very large.

Cultural prodigal would have had Jesus’ crowd divide and let the funeral procession pass, but that is not what happened! Because....

**“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. <sup>14</sup>And he came and touched the bier: and those that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise. <sup>15</sup>And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.” Luke 7:13-15**

## **II. Extreme Compassion Felt**

“He had compassion on her” – Gk – “moved with sympathy” Jesus saw her. Of course, she didn’t see Him, her mind, heart, and emotions were overwhelmed with grief. Her head was down, her eyes were filled with tears, she didn’t see Jesus! But “the Lord saw her,” Remember, Jesus was God in the flesh, He was the Man of Sorrows and definitely acquainted with grief. Christ, the Godman, was dwelling among them, and compassion **is** the character of God. At least six times we read of Jesus having compassion on the miserable state of individuals and He always relieved it! Again, just outside the gate of Nain, we are going to see the action of this great compassion. Realize the upcoming miracle was an act of compassion for the widow!

“Weep not.” – Gk – “do not go on weeping” To those hearing Jesus, this statement would have been considered not only strange but also rude! Weeping was called for and certainly expected! They might have thought, “What? Why would you say such a thing to a grieving mother, there is nothing outside of her son being raised from the dead that would cause her not to weep!”

“He came and touched the bier,” – The Old Testament Law had very strict protocols for those who would touch a dead body. It was a long, inconvenient process. (Num. 19) Therefore, Jews went to great lengths not to touch a corpse. But Jesus, the Lawgiver, often overruled laws with acts of mercy! When Jesus touched the open coffin, everyone would have been very surprised and notice, that everything stopped!

“And He said,” – It is recorded that Jesus raised three from the dead, this young man, Jairus’ daughter, and of course Lazarus. Scholars believe Jesus probably raised others that are not recorded in the Gospel record. In Luke 7:22, it seems to leave room that Christ raised others. I want you to know, that Jesus always spoke to the dead – he healed the blind, lepers, and the sick in various ways, but the dead, the Giver of Life always commanded with His voice. It reminds us of what we are taught concerning the Rapture in 1 Thess. 4:16-17, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout,” Jesus speaks to the dead, and they hear Him and obey! Jesus told the widow woman not to weep and then effortlessly removed the cause of her sorrow! “Young man, arise.” Gk–“Get up!”

“sat up and began to speak.” – And immediately the dead breathed life, he opened his eyes, he sat up, looked around, and said,....? We can only guess! But the tenses in the Greek have him speaking and continuing to speak! He was alive, he was strong, he was coherent, and...

“He delivered him to his mother.” – Jesus literally reunited this young man back to his mother! But that is how it will happen for all of us who have lost loved ones in the past, God will reunite us again! “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him... Then we which are alive and remain shall be called up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Thess. 4:14, 17 As I write this, in 5 days will be the date of my mother’s death from cancer. It will be 15 years. Those were hard, sad days. I still remember the wave of sorrow that poured over me when my brother-in-law called and said, “Scarlette, your mom is gone; she is in heaven.” How I wept as John held me; we weren’t surprised, she had struggled with cancer for several years, but the finality was now upon me. The words from 1 Thessalonians are a great comfort, just as Paul said they would! Jesus will reunite us again because He is the Victor over death! “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?...But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 15:55, 57

As we move on, verse 15 is the end of the incident, the next two verses reveal **all** the reactions!

**“And there came a fear on all : and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. <sup>17</sup>And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.” Luke 7:16-17**

**III. Extreme Power Felt** Remember, “many people” had come with Jesus to the outskirts of Nain and “many people” were with the widow on their way to the burial spot. These two large groups met and all of them became witnesses to the first person Jesus raised from the dead.

Two Emotions – We see two extreme opposite emotions.

Fear – In Greek, the phrase “fear on all” holds the emotional power of it coming on, seizing, taking over, and gripping the crowd. Actually, fear was a pretty healthy and understandable emotion when having witnessed the dead sit up and start speaking by the power of a man’s spoken word! By this time, many in the crowd may have seen Jesus heal a sick, demon possessed, or injured person, but giving life back to the dead? This was truly a fearful thing! (Other examples of this fear caused by Jesus’ miracles – Luke 8:25, 37)

Praise – But they came to the right conclusion and glorified or other words praised God. They recognized this was a work of God!

Two Phrases – As the crowds started to disburse and return to their home areas, verse 17 tells us the exact reports/rumors they unanimously took with them about Jesus. This report was given over and over again by the hundreds of people who witnessed the raising of the dead man. It was filled with both fear and praise to God!

“A great prophet is risen up among us” – It had been 400 years since a prophet had been given to Israel. Now they had two, John the Baptist, who was counted a prophet but now imprisoned by Herod, and Jesus of Nazareth. (John 4:19 - woman at the well; John 6:14 - feeding of the 5000; John 9:17 - man born blind; Luke 24:19 - two on the road to Emmaus) The truth was – He was the great Prophet sent from God. (Acts 3:22-26)

“God hath visited His people.” – Jesus’ great power was the key to their understanding Christ was from God. Just like Elijah and Elisha, some 900 years before, Jesus had the power to heal and raise the dead.

Two Areas – The news of Jesus spread throughout all of Israel!

Judea – This is south of Nain. Judea was the main religious and political hub of Israel. Most of the Religious Leaders and the Jewish Elders would live in Judea. They were already keeping a close eye on Jesus!

Galilee – Nain is in Galilee, the northern part of Israel surrounding the Sea of Galilee. There was more of a Gentile presence, active trade routes, and industry in this area. We would count these folks mostly blue-collar while Judea was white-collar.

I want to show you the result of this massive word-of-mouth spreading concerning Jesus. Let's look at the next chapter in Luke. (8:4, 19, 42) The crowds exploded because Jesus' power was on display!

### **Believers Application:**

The same compassion and care Jesus showed this widow is the same He feels for us in our misery, confusion, and loneliness. Jesus' unsolicited act of compassion dried the tears of this broken, hopeless, destitute woman. She is an example of those He had come to help! But how about you? Are you convinced of the sweetness, love, compassion, and care of your Heavenly Father? **HW #3-1** Realize, He is still compassionate for your needs! He is still moved by love and mercy for you, regardless of your age, station in life, and abilities! He still sees grief, troubles, illness....He sees divorce, wayward children, drug addiction, and cancer. Jesus knows our fear of death, loss, lack, and loneliness. He is aware of a failed test, a failed business, a failed marriage, and a failed relationships. He still sees tears, anguish, sleepless nights, and total exhaustion, and His reaction is always compassion – sympathy in action! **HW #3-2** He might not always erase the issue, but “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:14-16