

## Luke 7:11-17

Pentecost 3; June 26 & 27, 2022

Luck. Think about how many times we use that word. *That was a luck shot*, the coach might say to his player. *That was lucky*, a person might say after just avoiding an accident. A person might win a contest, and someone says to that person, *You are so lucky!* From early on in life, we all have that concept of luck. We have probably all seen what things are symbols of good luck: *four leaf clovers, a lucky rabbit's foot, a penny found, horseshoes, crossing your fingers*. And probably have seen things that are bad luck too: breaking a mirror, black cat that cross your path, opening an umbrella indoors, walking under a ladder. Or perhaps we have walked up to someone and they say *"wish me luck"* and we say, *"good luck."* Luck is defined as a force that brings good fortune or adversity.

The question is, what is that "force?" What is this thing we call *"luck"* and more importantly what does God say about luck? Actually, God says nothing about *"luck."* You will not find that word in the pages of the Bible. Things in this world just don't happen because of luck. Yes, God may allow bad things to happen to people. Yet, he promises that if bad things do happen, he can turn it around for good. He may keep evil things from coming into our lives. He may say *yes* or *no* for an answer to our prayers. Through all the events of our life, God promises to show favor and compassion to his people. Today, in the words of our text, we see Jesus having compassion and favor on the mother who had lost her son.

**"Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As 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. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her."** Last week in our Gospel lesson, we saw a centurion's servant healed by the words of Jesus in the city of Capernaum. It didn't take long for word to spread about Jesus. As he left Capernaum he traveled to Nain. Nain was about 25 miles southwest of Capernaum. As Jesus and the large crowd that was with him met another large crowd coming out of the city of Nain. That crowd was a funeral procession for a woman's only son. There outside of Nain, these two large crowds met.

This meeting wasn't by accident. As Jesus approached this woman, Luke tells us **"His heart went out to her."** Literally, *his guts were moved*. You know that gut-wrenching feeling when you can see someone in so much pain. It's that same feeling that the Good Samaritan had upon the man who had been beaten and left for dead. Jews and Samaritans did not like each other. They avoided each other as much as they possibly could. But when that Samaritan man saw a Jewish man who was left for dead, he just had to stop and *have compassion* on him. It's the same compassion that the Father shows the Prodigal son. It's that same feeling that Jesus expresses in our text today when **"his heart went out to her."**

This woman was in pain. She had lost her husband. She now had lost her son. This woman was in about as desperate a state a woman could be in at that time. While her son was still alive, there was hope. Now he was gone and all hope had gone with him. She couldn't support herself. She had no husband to provide for her. Her only son, who was most likely supporting her, had died. Her future was as dark as it possibly could get. She could not see any way out of where she was. As much as this crowd of people would have wanted to act, they couldn't bring back her son. The difference in Jesus is that when Jesus has compassion, it is also connected to action. These two crowds were about to see the action that only Jesus could do.

Jesus' heart also goes out to every single one of us here today. He sympathizes with our troubles. He sits by our side when we are lying, sick and hurt. Even though it may not always seem like it, he is sitting right there right next to us. Even though we may see no way out, Jesus does. He's not left us. Jesus cares about us at such important moments of our life. How can we trust Jesus in all of this? He is about to show us what kind of God we have. We have a God who can stare down the enemy of death and be victorious. We have a God who will bring back to life Jesus on Easter Sunday. This God is for you and me as well.

Then Jesus acts. **"Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, 'Young man, I say to you, get up!' The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother."** There outside of the city of Nain, Jesus showed why he had come. Jesus did not come to a live body to heal it. He came to a dead body to raise it to life again. He sat up, he stood up and Jesus gave him back to his mother. It's an interesting that

Luke writes: **“and Jesus gave him back to his mother.”** This man may have wanted to join the crowd that was following Jesus. In a loving and gentle way Jesus is saying to him: *Go and take care of your mother.*

How did the crowd react? **“They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.”** You can’t help but wonder if another scene played out in the minds of the crowd who were that day. One of the greatest prophets in the history of the Jewish people was the prophet, Elijah. An almost identical scene had played out during the days of Elijah. Elijah was staying with a widow in Zarephath during a severe famine and draught. There came a day where this widow’s son would die. In first Kings, we see Elijah stretch himself over the boy and cries out to God, **“Lord my God, let this boy’s life return to him!”** (1 Kings 17:21) God grants his request. Then God tells us in His Word: **“He gave him to his mother and said, “Look, your son is alive!”** (1 Kings 17:23)

The people standing outside the city of Nain that day saw a man who was greater than the prophet Elijah. Even though some may not have fully understand who was standing in front of them, Jesus was there showing them who He was. This was God who can raise the dead to life. This is God who can take even the awful things in this world, and work them out for his God. This is a God who loves us so much that not only can he raise the dead, he can also give his life to save yours on the cross. We may not always understand how God works. One thing is true, God is not a God of “luck.” This is a God who is for you. Trust him. He will not fail you. **“God has come to help his people.”** Amen.