

**PP Summer in Galilee: Jesus, the God of Compassionate Action**

**Part 6, Luke 7:11-17  
30/2019**

**6/29-**

We are spending our summer looking at the events of Jesus in northern Israel, and the one we are going to see today took place in a little town called Nain

***“Soon afterward He went to a town called Nain, and His disciples and a great crowd went with Him.” Luke 7:11***

Nain was 25 miles southwest of Capernaum, which to the Jewish people was counted as a day’s journey by foot

Nain means *‘pleasantness and beauty’* and it was as it was nestled on the slopes of a mountain It’s likely early evening that Jesus and those with Him ***“drew near to the gate of the town” 7:12*** And when they did, they encountered a funeral procession: ***“behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow” 7:12***

Funerals, grief and widowhood were all treated with the utmost respect among the Jewish people There was a tithe taken every three years for several classes of people, widows as well Widows were left dependent partly on the affection of relatives, especially the oldest son, whose birthright, or extra share of the property, imposed this duty upon him

But now, her only son, her remaining joy, was being carried to his grave and she was alone Funerals in ancient Israel were far different than what we normally experience in America Jews had developed 39 different regulations and forms of grieving

In extreme grief they would tear their garments to signify a torn and broken heart The tearing was to be done standing up and the tear was to be directly over the heart if the mourner was the father or mother of the deceased

Otherwise, the tear was to be near the heart but not over it

The tear had to be large enough to put a fist through, but could be sewn up with large, loose stitches for the first thirty days so that it would be visible but modest

Women, for modesty’s sake would rip their undergarments and wear them backwards and then tear the front of their gown so that no skin would be bared

Grieving men were forbidden to work, or wear shoes for 7 days, or even shave for 30 days

In his mourning, he could only read from Job, Jeremiah or Lamentations, the suffering books To read the Law of the Prophets was a joy and joy was not to be part of mourning

He could not eat meat or drink wine during the grieving period nor could he leave his town or village for 30 days

Those in grief did not eat at the table, but rather sat on low stools or the floor and the common meal of an egg dipped in ashes and salt was eaten on a chair instead of a table

In Jewish culture then, and still today, the dead are buried within 24 hours

When this young man died, a long blast on a shofar alerted the townsfolk that death had come His body would have almost immediately been placed on the floor of her home for preparation This grieving mom would have cut his hair and nails, washed his body, anointed him with oil, dressed him in his finest clothes and wrapped him in a linen shroud

Those helping her would then leave and allow her to be alone with her son

Sitting on the floor, she would pour out her laments of grief

When the time drew near for the funeral procession, her son’s body would be placed in an open

wicker basket, face up, with the hands folded on his chest  
 The basket was placed on a pallet or plank with handles called a bier so the pallbearers could transport the body  
 In Galilee, the rabbis taught that women should lead the dead out of this world into the next one, so the mother would have been in front of the bier, whose bearers walked without shoes  
 Behind the coffin walked professional mourners and singers whose jobs were to stir up grief by saying, *“Weep with them, all you who are bitter of heart”*  
 Behind them would walk the gathered citizens of Nain, and they are about to meet the God Who has all authority, even over death  
 \*\*And here is where we can find some powerful truths for us today:

### **PP 1-The heart of God is filled with compassion**

*“And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her”* Luke 7:13

In the ancient world, the most noble ideal, the perfect state of inner being, was stoicism  
 Think Star Trek, Spock, Vulcans, and you have a pretty good picture of stoicism  
 The stoics believed that one characteristic of God was apathy, the incapability of feeling  
 They had a sound argument it seemed, for if you could make someone sad or glad, then for that moment, you influenced that person, for that moment you were greater than that person  
 But no one could be greater than God they reasoned, therefore, God must be incapable of feeling  
 Here we see Jesus, God in flesh, Who, seeing this grieving mother, *‘had compassion on her’*

**PP ‘compassion’** to the Jewish mind was a yearning in the bowels, the deepest part of someone  
 We might say that a movie was *‘gut wrenching’*, or seeing someone suffer makes you sick to the stomach, feeling like a kick in the gut

When Jesus saw this grieving, weeping mother, a deep emotional response flared inside of Him, propelling Him to do something to relieve her suffering

*“Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still.”* 7:14

Compassion always costs us something: finances, time, effort, sometimes reputation  
 A priest would never have touched that coffin, for they believed to touch anything dead, even accidentally, would spiritually contaminate them before God

But Jesus would not let anything stand in the way of relieving this mother’s suffering, so *“He 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.”* Luke 7:14-15

This is the heart of God...compassion that demands action

### **PP 2-God always sees the big picture**

*“and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’”*

There is a biblical word for weep which means to cry silently; a saying goodbye to good friends  
 However, this word *‘weep’* means to sob and wail out of pain and hopelessness

Jesus was saying to her, *Don’t weep as one who has no hope*

He is calling her to place her hope in Him, which seems heartless, insensitive, but He knows He’s about to raise her son to life

How nearsighted we all tend to be

Look at the beginning of Luke 7, and see that Jesus had come from Capernaum where He had healed the servant of a Roman Centurion

Then, **verse 11** begins, *'Soon afterward...'*

The young man died within 24 hours before the funeral, so why didn't Jesus get there sooner? Friends, have you ever said to God, *"If only You would have come sooner"*; or *"Why didn't you heal my loved one?"*; *"Why did you let this happen?"*

If so, His Spirit may whisper quietly into your heart, **PP** ***"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."** Isaiah 55:8-9*

When pain and sorrow come to our lives, I have found two truths an anchor for my soul

**PP** *Nothing will come into my life but that which contains my ultimate and highest good*

Oh, sometimes our hearts will scream that this cannot be true in this circumstance, and that is especially when we must cry out, even with weak faith, our Heavenly Father is always good and He sits on a throne higher than all

This broken world is full of pain and sorrow, and there will be times you cannot make sense of something, but above the clouds the sun is still shining, though you cannot see its rays

**PP** ***"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."** 1 Corinthians 13:12*

Ancient mirrors were made of highly polished obsidian or metal, usually bronze, not glass, and they could only give a dim reflection

One day we will see clearly, know fully, but that day is not today, but we must trust our God

The other truth is actually a question, and one that I eventually have to boldly ask myself

**PP** *What do I want more, my own welfare or God's glory?*

This is a struggle for most of us I think, and we need to remember that all of what Jesus did was for His Father's glory: ***"Fear seized them all, and they glorified God..."** Luke 7:16*

**PP** ***"Father...I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do."** John 17:4*

Is this my highest motive...that in all ways, even as I trust in Him through this trial, that I show Him off to the world as good and powerful and loving?

Has anyone ever said to you: *I don't know how you can have such peace in a time like this!?*

God shows Himself in His mighty acts, and we show Him in our trust and obedience

We have opportunities to declare our trust in our Father Who loves us beyond measure

The Father sent Jesus at the exact time to encounter that funeral procession, to raise that young man from the dead, and relieve the suffering of that mother, and everyone in Israel heard ***"And this report about Him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country"** 17*

He was in northern Israel, Galilee, and Judea was southern Israel...all Israel heard that He did But what they didn't see, is that the resurrection of this man pointed to a much deeper truth

**PP 3-Salvation is all of grace!**

***"And the dead man sat up and began to speak, And Jesus gave him to his mother."** 7:15*

How incredible that Jesus brought a dead person back to life in front of thousands of witnesses

Yet as incredible as this is, it speaks of a God Who is after something even more wonderful  
I had the opportunity two weeks ago to talk about eternal life with an 81 year old man who's  
been diagnosed with cancer

He said to me that he's lived a long life of and if he only months to live, he's okay with that  
He asked me if a lot of people I meet struggle with dying, and I said that in my experience, if  
they are older, their struggle is not with death, but with regrets

He responded, *'I don't have regrets. I've done a lot of good things, and some bad things in my  
life. But I've lived a good life.'*

This gave me the opportunity to ask how he knows if the scales has tipped in his favor before  
God, that he has done more good than bad sinful deeds in his life?

But my question didn't yet get at the true helplessness of the sinner's condition

For Paul wrote, **PP** *"All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does  
good, not even one."* **Romans 3:12**

He is echoing the prophet Isaiah, **PP** *"We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our  
righteous deeds are like a polluted garment."* **Isaiah 64:6**

My friend listened as I explained this to him, and I asked if he ever realized that even the good  
things we do don't really look that good when compared to the perfection of God

He paused, and then agreed, allowing me to explain that salvation isn't about what we do for  
God, but what God has done for us in sending His Son to die in our place

But let's leave my conversation with my friend and look to you for a moment

Do you realize, and can you admit that you are helpless to save yourself, to earn your salvation?

This is one of the most difficult confessions for an American...we are fiercely pragmatic and  
independent, pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps

Yet put it boldly, in Luke 7 language...have you ever realized that spiritually speaking, you are  
that dead young man?

And what did that young man do to come back to life?

The answer is nothing!

The dead man didn't clean up his act before Jesus would resurrect him

He didn't barter with Jesus, he didn't earn his resurrection, he was absolutely dead

What a clear picture of the good news of salvation...that we are dead in sin, unable to save  
ourselves, **PP** *"But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he  
loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with  
Christ—by grace you have been saved"* **Ephesians 2:4-5**

Salvation is all of grace, and not one speck is due to us, our effort, or our deserving it

Is there anyone you know that is suffering?

What is your heart's response to that person, and what are you doing about it?

Are you learning to trust God in the midst of life's difficulties, believing that He sees the big  
picture even when you don't?

When is the last time you had the privilege of witnessing a spiritually dead person come to life?

Do you pray for that, and are you faithfully telling others of the good news of salvation?

Amen?

Pray