

Luke 7:11 “Now it happened, the day after, that [Jesus] went into a city called Nain; & many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. **12** And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. **13** When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." **14** Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." **15** So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. **16** Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." **17** And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.”

Doing the Impossible

A few weeks ago, we spoke about the major areas of concern for serious Christians in our times: We must come face to face with the culture of death, the oppression of big government and the worship of secular science and it can be easy to just throw up our hands and declare there is no hope! These are obviously challenges we cannot meet or solve in our own strength & so we must remember to do God’s work in God’s ways, as Francis Schaeffer often reminded the Saints.

- To help us see how we are to engage, I have returned to two important lessons from in Luke’s Gospel account.

Luke wrote his Gospel account and the book of Acts to provide his friend Theophilus, & anyone who honestly reads his accounts, with a CERTAINTY about what happened with the coming of Jesus and what it means in history.

The story is told from the 1st chapter of Luke to the final verses of Acts! It tells us how Jesus came to save His people from their sins, to win His Bride the Church & how the Spirit is now filling the earth with His Kingdom!

This is to be our confidence, especially in troubled times...

- Our sins are forgiven
- We are now Christ’s Bride, the Church
- The Spirit of God will use the Church to fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus!

So, yes God uses the Saints in His Church to meet the challenges of this and any age and the gates of hell cannot stand against that power.

Last week in our study of faith I focused on how the Kingdom is grown naturally as God gives the blessing of covenant children to Christian families. But we know that this not the only way that God works because we are commanded to disciple the nations and so we are to reach out and share the Gospel in a needy world.

This week, we come to the next account in Luke which deals with impossible commands so we can remember that we are not expected to do these impossible tasks in our own strength.

No parent can save their children and we can never bring a new convert into the Kingdom in our own strength or wisdom...

As we will learn this morning we are wholly dependent on the work of God as we faithfully raise our covenant children in the fear and admonition of the Lord and as we share the Gospel with those who have hardened hearts.

In their Gospel accounts, both Matthew & Luke tell us of the Centurion who had GREAT faith, which we studied last week!

- **But it is only Luke who goes on to tell us of the visit that Jesus made to the city of Nain.**

And there we find just how faithful we are called to be when dealing with the challenges of our time. The Roman Centurion understood that Jesus needed only to say the word to heal his dying servant... As a soldier he understood what would later be stated in the Great Commission...

- **Jesus has ALL power & authority in heaven and on earth!**

That Truth is in many ways what this short account of the visit by Jesus to Nain confirms...

We must NOT overlook the very first detail Luke gives in this account: “The day after...”

- **There are no surprises in God’s story of redemption, no accidents or mere coincidences.**

The meeting of life and death here at Nain was foreordained to happen and the Holy Spirit included the account in the Gospel of Luke to demonstrate the real authority and power of Jesus.

- **In short, He gives us a powerful image of how the coming of Jesus has changed everything!**

Let us now carefully consider the text, taking in all of what happened that day at Nain...

These few verses are packed with details... IMPORTANT details!

Luke tells us that Jesus enters a city:

- **Nain is a small village that we know almost nothing about and it is never again mentioned in the New Testament**

Jesus is followed by His disciples and a large crowd...

- **We see a procession of life!**

Jesus & His followers are approaching the city gate, coming into the city.

At the gate of the city, they meet a crowd that is coming out of that same city, at that same time.

- **A funeral procession, not just a sad procession, but one of the saddest we could imagine!**

A mother, who is already a widow, has lost her son... her only son –

- **In the agony of this mother, and the mourning of the procession, we see the great enemy brought forth by the fall of man... Death!
As God proclaimed in the Garden, “in the day you eat there of you shall surely die”**

- **Death that will find us all –**

- **Death: The final enemy to be defeated at the end of history!**

This widow, as with ALL of Adam’s race, is hopeless and has no power to change her circumstances...

- **Here we see as a clear contrast, a procession of death.**

Jesus comes from the other direction and brings hope: Life meets death at Nain

- **This is the story of the Gospel, the Good News!**

A story of contrasts like those we often see in the Bible:

Sheep or goats, the right path or the wrong path, light or darkness, wisdom or foolishness, life or death...

Luke then says: “When the Lord saw her...”

- This is the first time Luke refers to Jesus as “the Lord,” a title he goes on to use often in the rest of his Gospel account and the Book of Acts.

“When the Lord saw her He had compassion on her.”

Here we see the truth that we celebrate with the baptism of each new Covenant child or those who are given saving faith and brought to repentance as adults, “we love God because He first loved us.”

- It is Jesus who has compassion and turns death into life!

The important thing that I want us to notice this morning is that Jesus then gives two commands:

- To the mother He says, “do not weep”
- To the son He says, “Young man, I say to you arise.”

It is important for us to see and understand that BOTH commands were humanly speaking impossible! But Jesus with these commands also provides that power that enables them to obey!

- Jesus will now demonstrate that He has authority, even over the final enemy: Death itself...
- Jesus speaks the word and the boy is able to obey as he “sat up and began to speak.”
- The boy rises and the mother’s weeping is turned to celebration!

Here Jesus speaks to just this one young man...

- In the final day He will speak & ALL the dead shall rise!
- But here at Nain, both this mother & son are given new life: the new life that is available to those who trust in Jesus!

As we ponder the coming or giving of this new life here at Nain, we should remember the glorious picture of the dry bones given by the Prophet to God’s people in Ezekiel 37 ...

“1 The hand of Jehovah came upon me & brought me out in the Spirit of Jehovah, & set me down in the midst of the valley; & it was full of bones.

2 Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry.”

- God wanted to make sure that Ezekiel saw how serious the problem of sin and rebellion was... There were LOTS of LOTS of very dry bones.

3 “And He said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” So I answered, “O Lord God, You know.”

- The prophet was willing to trust & believe God, but from a human perspective there was NO hope for these dry bones, just as there was no hope for the widow’s son, or for us to prevail in today’s battles.

4 “Again He said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of Jehovah! 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. 6 I will put sinews on you & bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am Jehovah.”

- When we are hesitant to witness or doubt that God can reach a particularly stubborn heart, it is these words that we must remember:
- God told Ezekiel to preach to dead, dry bones and he obeyed!

' ' 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; & the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. 9 Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says Jehovah God: "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ' ' 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army."

This is why we are called to carry out the Great Commission:

- **We are to disciple the nations and as we do so God will give life to the dry bones in those nations bringing forth a great army as the Kingdom of Jesus fills the earth!**

We bring Good News to a lost world just as Jesus did to this mother where in verse 15 we read:

"And Jesus presented him to his mother."

- **Jesus gives a mother and her son new life!**
- **Jesus offers us new life!**
- **Jesus offers all the nations new life IF they will kiss the Son!**

This new life in Jesus is appropriated with that great faith that Jesus saw in the Roman Centurion!

- **So what does the encounter of life and death at Nain mean for us today?**

First and foremost, these truths are demonstrated each week as God renews His covenant with us during the divine worship service.

- **We are called into His presence and reminded that without God's compassion, we would be dead in our trespasses and sins and on the road to hell.**
- **We are assured that our sins have been forgiven, separated from us as far as the east is from the west... Our death has become His life!**
- **We are instructed from God's Word, God accepts our gifts and prayers, just as that young man sat up and began to speak!**
- **Then we come to this Table to feast in the very presence of God.**

Death has been turned into life, and we are presented to Jesus just as the boy was to his mother!

- **Finally, we are commissioned and blessed... Sent out in a new direction knowing & celebrating our new life in Christ!**

This is a blessing given to the Saints each and every Lord's Day and one that we must never take for granted!

- **Another important lesson to learn from this brief encounter at Nain is that we have NO problems that are too big for Jesus!**

That was a tragic day in Nain, but in the end the boy has new life and is presented to the widow who lost her only son: A glorious happy ending!

Here we must remember to never be a people choosing to continue suffering while Jesus is offering new life... Why we are to be anxious for nothing and always rejoicing!

Can you imagine this widow had been upset because Jesus had messed up a perfectly good funeral...

- **And yet that is sometimes the reaction we see in people when real help is offered by Jesus!**

We see here that Jesus offers new life and when we consider how it applies in our lives we quickly run out of excuses...

- Yet, we often fear to hear, to obey or even to present the Good News in its simplicity!

Simplicity that comes with impossible commands... Some may be struggling in their marriages: Jesus gives “impossible commands” like he did to the widow and son...

- Husbands love you wives
- Wives win them without a word

-God has blessed our congregations with many covenant children & as we saw last week, we are powerless when it comes to their salvation...

- They are born dead in their trespasses & sins... dry bones with no life in themselves!
- We baptize them in God’s name believing that He gives them life!
- We then obey His command to raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord, reminding them often about all that God has done for them!

-We often have financial challenges, as individuals, in our church family and even as a nation: We must follow God’s simple principles:

- We must give God His tithe *[many consider an “impossible command!]*
- We must have honest weights & measures *[which our government thinks is an impossible command!]*

-Men are drawn to pornography at epidemic levels today...

- Paul tells Timothy: “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

- There are many today who abuse drugs or alcohol...

- Paul says: “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit”

To understand how we are to follow all these ‘impossible’ commands,

- The Lord’s Day must be our priority.
- As a church this means being properly focused on doctrine, fellowship, the sacraments and prayer as we see in Acts 2:46

“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

- If there are things in our lives that distract us from these priorities, then we must leave them behind just as the widow and son left that funeral procession to enjoy new life!

-And finally, there is a lost world that we are commissioned to disciple:

-We all have lost family members!

➤ **We need to bring them to Jesus!**

➤ **As Charles Spurgeon admonishes in his morning devotion on Mark 9:19:**

“When they are grown up they may wallow in sin and foam with enmity against God; then when our hearts are breaking we should remember the great Physician’s words, “Bring them unto me.” Never must we cease to pray until they cease to breath. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives!”

➤ **Life met death at Nain and death lost!**

➤ **Death lost and that truth must change how we live our lives:**

Life met death that day in the city of Nain!

Jesus brings life to all corners of our lives and prepares us for the battles of our day...

➤ **Let us with this rejoicing mother and resurrected son leave our funeral processions behind, proclaiming to a watching world that “God has visited His people!”**

➤ **Jesus has come and it HAS changed everything...**

➤ **Let us live as those who have great faith and obedience because we believe that great Truth!**

Communion Meditation: Proverbs 9:1-6

“Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; She has slaughtered her meat, She has mixed her wine, She has also furnished her table.

She has sent out her maidens,

She cries out from the highest places of the city, “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, 5 “Come, eat of my bread And drink of the wine I have mixed.

6 Forsake foolishness and live,

And go in the way of understanding.”