

**Luke 7:1** “1 Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, [Jesus] entered Capernaum. 2 And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. 3 So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, 5 "for he loves our nation, & has built us a synagogue." 6 Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 9 When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" 10 And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.

11 Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and 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.”

## *Life Meets Death at Nain*

Well obviously I am not Pastor Liberati and you will have to wait one more week to hear his message listed in the order of worship!

As a pastor there is a great deal of work that goes into the preparation of a message and in the back of your mind you are concerned that something would happen at the last minute to disrupt your preparation or ability to deliver that message, like waking up on Sunday with no voice! This was such a week for Pastor Liberati with Vanessa’s health concerns so I am here on short notice with an older message I trust will be a blessing.

Some years ago, we took a long journey through the books of Luke and Acts, two books that make up almost a third of the New Testament!

- It was a real blessing to study Luke’s orderly account of what God is doing in history!
- In all the messages, outside of the Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill, which was special to me, *[but took four messages]*, this short account at the City of Nain remains as my favorite & our morning message!

Luke wrote his Gospel account and the book of Acts to provide his friend Theophilus, & anyone who honestly reads his accounts, a CERTAINTY of 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: The glorious story of how Jesus came to save His people from their sins; how Jesus came to win His Bride the Church & how the Spirit is now working through that Bride filling the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus!

**In the midst of this grand story, we find this encounter at the small village of Nain!**

**In their Gospel accounts, both Matthew & Luke tell us of the Centurion who had GREAT faith!**

- **But it is only Luke who tells us of the visit that Jesus made to the city of Nain and there we find some important lessons.**

**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 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!**

**Jesus enters a city: Nain**

- **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...**

- **What we should see as a procession of life!**

**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 has lost her son...**

**her only son –**

**A mother who is also a widow!**

- **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!**

**“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...**

- **We see 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 tells us that:

“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!

I want us to notice this morning how 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 with such commands from Jesus, we know that the Spirit of God gives us the faith & power 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!

Both mother & son in the end obey the impossible commands of Jesus.

- Here at Nain, both this mother & son are given new life:  
The new life that is available to all those who trust in Jesus!

To more fully understand how the coming & giving of this new life in Jesus changes the world, we should remember the glorious & related picture of the dry bones given by the Prophet to God’s people in Ezekiel 37: Here God provides the Prophet and all of us with a glorious picture of the power of God’s Work & Spirit.

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.

4 Again He said to me, “Prophecy 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!**
- **Just as we are called on to obey the Great Commission & be those beautiful feet bringing Good News.**

**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.”**

- **Please notice that the power to put flesh on these bones did NOT lie in any ability that the Prophet might have had, but in the power of the Word that he spoke to them!**

**But the Spirit of God is not yet done working on these lost souls...**

**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 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, in a procession of death.**
- **We are assured that our sins have been forgiven, separated from us as far as the east is from the west... We join His procession of 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 our new life in Christ and sharing it with others as we see in our text!**

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."

- These are blessings given to us as Saints each and every Lord's Day which 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!

This 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!

A sad fact in this life is that people often choose to continue suffering while Jesus is offering new life...

Can you imagine this widow being upset because Jesus had messed up a perfectly good funeral...  
*[not unlike some today who are upset by our celebration of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July!]*

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

-God has blessed our congregations with many covenant children & they will bring many blessings & trials: And we know 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 the promises that He can give 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!]*
- Or what seems like simple, but impossible advice from Gary North that to have financial security and contentment, we should work hard and spend less than we make!

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

- Paul gives Timothy an impossible command from a human perspective:  
"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:

Here is how the Apostle Paul admonished the Saints in Philippi to respond to this great truth and we are called upon to do the same:

Philippians 3:7 “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

- Life met death that day in the city of Nain!

It teaches us that Jesus brings life to all corners of our lives...

- 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 believe that it is so!

**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.”