

TRINITY

BIBLE CHURCH DALLAS

The Sermon

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Luke 7:11-17

"Death Defeated"

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TRANSCRIPT

I want you to take your Bible and turn with me to Luke chapter 7 as we continue our journey through the gospel of Luke Sunday by Sunday and verse by verse, and we come to Luke 7:11. The title of this message is "Death Defeated."

Luke chapter 7, beginning in verse 11, "Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, 'Do not weep.' And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise!' The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, 'A great prophet has arisen among us!' and, 'God has visited His people!' This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district." What a scene.

[Prayer] Father, as we now will spend the next minutes looking at this passage, we ask that You would press it to our hearts, to our minds, that the imprint of this passage would be upon us and that we would carry this with us. I pray that those who have come to church today discouraged would find

encouragement even in this account. I pray that those who have lost a loved one would find encouragement here. And so, Father, we look to You to take Your Word and to bless it to our lives. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.
[End]

In these verses we read about the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to raise the dead. And in many ways, this is the most powerful display of a miracle, to reverse death and to bring someone back to life. Death is man's greatest enemy - physical death, spiritual death, eternal death. And we see here that Jesus Christ is the only one who can conquer our greatest enemy, which is death.

This will be a temporal victory in that this son whom Jesus raises from the dead will die again years later. But it is a foreshadowing of the resurrection at the end of the age when our bodies will be raised from the grave and be reunited with our soul and spirit, and we will be presented faultless before the Lord. in our resurrected body. If you want to know what your resurrection body will be like, look to the Lord Jesus Christ after His resurrection. He is the prototype. He is the pattern after which we will be conformed.

And so, in this account, we see that no circumstance is impossible with the Lord Jesus Christ. He can take the most impossible situation and in a moment flip it and change it. And as we look at this passage, I also want you to take note of the compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ, that not only does He have power, but He has pity, and He uses His power in a way that draws Him near those who are brokenhearted. And so there's much encouragement for us to draw from this passage. This will be the first of three resurrections that we have the record of in the four Gospels. The third and final one will be raising Lazarus from the dead.

But let's walk through this passage. Let's just jump into it right now. And the first thing I want you to note is in verse 11, "His constant movement. His constant movement." Here we see Jesus constantly on the move. He's

rarely stationary. He's always on foot traveling to preach, to teach, and in his case, heal.

So, in verse 11, we read, "Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain." When he says, "Soon afterwards," he's talking about immediately after the previous miracle that Jesus had just performed in verses 1 through 10, which we looked at last week, where Jesus healed the slave, the centurion, without ever even having to go there. And so that's why now verse 11, "Soon afterwards," it could literally be the next day. And Matthew Henry takes it that way, "The next day He went to a city called Nain."

Nain is a small town. It's not a large, important town. It's 25 miles southeast of Capernaum where Jesus just was. So it would have been a full day's travel, 25 miles, probably on foot, to now come to the city of Nain, "and His disciples were going along with Him." In this instance, I think the disciples referred to the twelve, those who were the closest to Him. And they are in his hip pocket. They want to be as close to Christ as they can.

And we also read, "and accompanied by a large crowd." So Jesus would have been at the head of this parade. He's surrounded by His disciples, and then accompanied by a large crowd, no doubt from Capernaum and other towns that have been drawn near to Christ. The word "large" means "vast," "great." So it's not just a crowd, it's a large crowd, and the word "crowd" indicates "multitude" or "swelling throng." And so this one verse could almost be like a day in the life of Jesus, a typical day in the life of Jesus as He is constantly on the move. There's no grass growing under His feet. He is going from town to town to town, and He is energized by this.

In John 4:34, Jesus said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." And when we serve the Lord, it energizes us. If we're just sitting stationary and sitting still and not doing anything, there is a spiritual atrophy that sets in. But you have to expend energy to have energy. And Jesus is expending energy, and He is gaining energy as He is traversing, really, Galilee which is in the north. And Galilee would be His home base.

The second thing I want you to see is "the accessible life." That's in verse 12. And what I want us to see is that Jesus did not live in a bubble, disconnected from real people with real needs. He was in the mix of life and rubbing shoulders with people.

And in verse 12 we read, "Now as He approached the gate of the city," as He's drawing near the front gate of the city of Nain. Now, this is the most trafficked place in the city. There is a front gate which suggests that there is a wall that goes around the city, and to enter the city, you would have to go through the gate. It is where the city fathers and the city elders would gather and discuss business and discuss issues that are going on in the community. And so Jesus is now approaching the gate with His disciples and with this really huge throng of people that are following Him. And as He does, His crowd is going into the city. He's not in yet. But there now comes a huge parade coming toward Him, and it's like the two are going to meet just outside the front gate of the city.

We read, "a dead man was being carried." A dead man, a corpse, probably wrapped in a burial shroud. He's being carried. He's being carried on what would be like a board, like a plank. It's open, like an open casket. And he's being carried by some men who have this board hoisted up on their shoulders and carrying him so that he can be buried outside the city limits, to the side of a hill that has been carved out that would serve as a burial place. And so, "a dead man was being carried."

He's not just a dead man. We read in verse 12, "he is the only son of his mother." I mean, it's always heartbreaking whenever a child precedes his parents in death. It's just so unnatural. And no doubt, she's grieving. The burial would take place within 24 hours. So there's been no time for her to console herself. There's been really no time for her to receive words of encouragement from others. I mean, this is a raw wound as she now is having to bury her only son.

And the next thing we read, "and she was a widow." She's been down this path before. She's had to bury her own husband, no doubt, walking this very same path to head to the very same rocky cliff to lay him next to her deceased husband. She has lost a husband. Now she has lost her only son. She's now left, really, all to herself to care for herself. She has no provider. She has no protector. She is left with no income, no companionship, and she's just left in a black hole of suffering.

And as she is coming out with, we would say today, the pallbearers, "a sizable crowd from the city was with her." "Sizable" means it's large. And "crowd," it's a multitude. So, we don't know the exact number, but it's a vast number. And when someone dies in a small town like Nain, it, in one way or another, affects almost everyone in town, as there are family, extended family, as there are friends, as there are neighbors. They would be a part of this sizable crowd as well as was the custom in this day, there are professional mourners that you would hire - women to weep and wail as a public expression of grief. And all of these family, friends, neighbors, professional mourners are here to support her in her loss and to show their respect. But even their presence cannot make up for her loss. Even their words of encouragement cannot bring her son back.

And so, they are headed out of town as they now are confronted by Jesus. And this is a providential meeting. I mean, this was wired in eternity past. This is no happenstance. This is no chance encounter. This is within the purview of the providence of God. And God is the one who has established the steps of His Son Jesus to be here at the front gate at this time, and that this young man would have died the day before, and now they are coming out in this funeral procession.

We could put it this way, this was a divine appointment, not a chance meeting, as God the Father has ordered the steps of all who are involved in this. God's will is always on time. It's never early. It's never late. And so it is with your life. His timing is perfect for you to find the next job, for you to find your spouse, for you to become pregnant, for you to bury a parent. There's nothing random within the will of God.

So, this leads us now to verse 13, "His tender compassion." And we see in verse 13, "When the Lord saw her." It's hard to go beyond those words without pausing. "When" is the idea. "As soon as the Lord saw her." I mean, He saw her. I mean, this is a large funeral procession with many people in this vast crowd. But Jesus saw her because she is the one who is in greatest need. I mean, it's as though He has tunnel vision toward her. He could look nowhere else. His eyes were drawn to her, to her sad face, to her weeping eyes, to her blank stare, to her empty countenance. He saw her.

And then we read, "He felt compassion for her." We've talked about this before, but this Greek word for "compassion" that's translated into our English Bible as "compassion," and that's a very good translation, means "to feel something so deep that it's like it's in the pit of your stomach." We say today, "I love you with all my heart." Well, in this day and time, they went even deeper than that. And it's down in their intestines, down when you feel something so strong, you lose all appetite, you cannot even eat. Jesus felt compassion for her. The NIV translation translates it, "His heart went out to her," almost as if His heart is leaping out of His chest for this woman who is now left alone, and Jesus can relate to her.

It's interesting that there's no more mention of Joseph, only Mary in the unfolding gospel accounts – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – and it is the reasonable assumption to presume that Joseph has died, what we would call a premature death, and has left Mary to tend for Jesus and His stepbrothers. And so Jesus can easily put Himself into this woman's place because for however many years before He started His public ministry, He cared for His mom, and He loved His mom, and He was the man of the house.

And it's interesting that when we go to the cross in John 19, as Jesus is hanging on the cross and Mary is there at the foot of the cross and the apostle John is at the foot of the cross, Jesus, as He's nailed there, says, "Woman, behold your son; and son, behold your mother." And Jesus is caring for His mother as He is suspended on the cross as He's pouring out His rich, red, royal blood. As He is suffering agony upon that cross, He's caring for His mother.

And so Jesus, it says in verse 13, "He felt compassion for her." Of course He felt compassion for her on a human level. He can put Himself in her skin and feel something of what she's going through.

"And so Jesus said to her," - verse 13 - "Do not weep." Now this word "weep" gives us some insight into what she is experiencing because this word "weep" means "loud expressions of pain and sorrow," "wailing." And at first it seems to be a cold thing to say, "Woman, don't weep." I mean, even Jesus wept at the loss of Lazarus. And Ecclesiastes 3 says, "There's a time to weep." If there's ever a time to weep, this is it. This is the time for her to weep. But Jesus now says, "Do not weep," as He tries to console her. And this hints that Jesus will do something that will remove her weeping. He did not wait for her to come to Him and to say, "Would You please do something?" No, Jesus steps into this situation and took the initiative to care for her.

Now, one key factor that we need to pause and give thought to here is that both Old and New Testament give instruction on caring for widows. Exodus 22:22, "You shall not afflict any widow." Deuteronomy 24:17, "You shall not take a widow's garment in pledge." It's almost like widows are a category unto themselves. And in the New Testament, as well as in the Old Testament, they will add orphans with widows. But special care needs to be given to widows who are living without the support and supply of a husband.

In Psalm 146:9, we read, "The Lord protects the widow." Even God draws close to the widow. And you recall in the book of Job when his three friends begin to assail him saying, "You wouldn't be suffering like this except there must be sin in your life. Because you have sin in your life, that's why you're suffering." So Job is put in this awkward position of having to offer a self-defense.

And in Job 31, this chapter is kind of the hallmark chapter on the self-defense of the integrity of his life. And in verse 16 of that chapter, he appeals to his care of widows, that he has lived a righteous life, a blameless life. In Job 31:16, "If I have kept the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail," - verse 22 - "let my shoulder fall from the socket and my arm be broken off at the elbow." I mean, Job is saying, "I have not been a cause for the countenance of a widow to be downcast. I have come alongside widows and cared for them." And this is just one of many self-defenses that Job gives. to his three friends.

And then, of course, you're very familiar with James 1:27, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this," - So, what is pure and undefiled religion? He says - "to visit orphans and widows in their distress." You go to them and you go visit them and encourage them and see, "Is there anything that I can do to assist you or help you?"

So to apply this, those of you who have a widowed mother, those of you who have a widowed grandmother, those of you who have a widowed aunt, you need to take care of her. This is pure and undefiled religion. And I think this is a part of what is drawing Jesus' eye to this woman as she now is about to bury her only son. And those of you who are sitting near a widow in this house of worship today, you need to speak to her. You need to encourage her. You need to ask, "How can I pray for you?" It's pure and undefiled religion. And Jesus now is being drawn into helping her.

This leads to verse 14, "His personal involvement." Jesus did more than just feel compassion for her, He was love in action. He got involved. And in verse 14 we read, "And He" - Jesus - "came up and touched the coffin." He approached the coffin and drew near to it and just touched it in a gentle, pastoral way. He just touches the coffin. And the coffin, again, is a plank of wood like a stretcher without a covering. So it's really like an open casket with the dead body and a shroud. And the coffin is at the head of this procession. I mean, when I do a funeral, the pastor is in a car in this motorcade; you're at the head of procession right behind the body.

And so, "He came up and touched the coffin," - which is at the head of this parade - "and the bearers" - those carrying the dead body on their shoulders - "came to a halt." They immediately stopped the procession. They must have sensed something unusual to come to a complete halt as Jesus only just touched the coffin.

"And He said, 'Young man.'" Jesus addressed the dead body. This is like in John 11 when He said, "Lazarus, come forth." This is like what we'll see in Luke 8, "Child, arise." So, Jesus now speaks to the corpse, which for anyone else to do this would be the most irrational thing that anyone could do. But Jesus said, "I say to you," - very directly and emphatically - "arise!" The word "arise" literally means "wake up," "be aroused from your slumber." The dead body is just laying on this plank, in a sense, like the dead body gives the appearance of taking a nap. It's just laying there. And Jesus said, "Arise! Wake up!"

We do not know where Jesus was headed as He's going into the city of Nain, but what we do need to see here is that Jesus stopped where He was going and Jesus got personally involved. And this is what you and I must do. There are times in our lives as we are headed to even a study, and we encounter someone who is in need, that we need to stop and be sensitive and help them if we can.

Verse 15, "His miraculous power." This is without any time delay. "The dead man sat up." He raised up on this board. Life reentered into his body. His eyes flickered and opened. His muscles flexed. His spine went vertical. Jesus sovereignly raised him from the dead. It's an extraordinary miracle that takes place.

And then it says, "and began to speak," which gives evidence that this is a true miracle. His soul reentered his body and his brain began to think. His heart began to pump. His mouth moved and spoke intelligent words, "and began to speak." We're not told what he said because that's really not important. What is important is that Jesus raised him from the dead.

And then we read, "And Jesus gave him back to his mother." In some way, handed him back to her. Perhaps, Jesus had them lower the plank and help the man off the plank and reunite him with his mother and his mother with him. It's such a tender scene: "Jesus gave him back to his mother." And the emotional impact of this upon her would be impossible for us to describe. She must have collapsed to her knees. She would have been overwhelmed with emotion. And Jesus did it.

I mean, Jesus said in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life." And in Revelation 1:18, Jesus said, "I have the keys of death and Hades." You know what that means? No one enters the grave apart from Christ, and no one comes out of the grave apart from Christ. He alone has the keys to the grave. No one enters, no one leaves apart from Christ.

This is a staggering miracle. And it was so public. This is in front of all of these two large crowds such that it can be easily verified what happened. This wasn't something that happened in a back corner that no one saw. This is at the front gates of the city. This is with swelling throngs following Jesus in a huge funeral procession following this widow before the eyes of everyone. No, this was a real miracle. Jesus has supreme authority and omnipotence to do whatever He so pleases.

Well, this brings us finally to verse 16, "the dramatic effect." In verse 16, we read, "Fear gripped them all." I mean, if you and I had been standing there that day, I think our cavities would have fallen out of our teeth. I mean, we wouldn't even have a category to know how to respond to this. The word "fear," it's the Greek word *phobos*. It comes into the English language as "phobia." The word means "dread that causes flight." In other words, it is so sobering and so terrifying what you've just seen that you fall away from it. You don't draw closer, you fall away from it out of fear.

They're thrown back, "and fear gripped them all," laid hold of them and will not let them go. And when he says, "them all," it's referring to both

groups - the group that has come with Jesus from Capernaum and the group that has come out of Nain in this funeral procession. Top to bottom, everyone who was standing there that day was gripped with fear. They were in a state of shock. They've never seen anything like this. Of course they haven't; neither have you, "and they began glorifying God."

"Glorifying" is a Greek word *doxazō*, comes into the English language as "doxology." We sing the doxology to begin each worship service here at Trinity. That's the very word here, "glorifying," meaning "magnifying God," "extolling God," "praising God," because they knew only God could have done this. This isn't the result of some witch doctor. This isn't the result of some cult leader. Only God could raise the dead. They understood this. And they said, "And a great prophet has arisen." Well, Jesus was a great prophet. He was also more than a prophet.

In the Reformation, John Calvin noted the threefold offices of Jesus drawn from the Old Testament as Prophet, Priest, and King; that Jesus is the greatest prophet, that's Deuteronomy 18:15; that He is the greatest priest who had to make only one sacrifice for sin as He offered Himself upon the cross; and He is King of kings and Lord of lords - Prophet, Priest, and King. But they acknowledged on the limited knowledge that they had there that day that "a great prophet has arisen, because when He opens His mouth, God speaks." When He opens His mouth, the words of God come flowing out of the mouth of Jesus. And Jesus said that in John's gospel multiple times, "I speak the words that the Father has given to Me." Oh, He is the Great Prophet. He's the greatest prophet. He's the greatest preacher. He's the greatest teacher. He's the greatest evangelist. He's just the greatest everything.

And then they said, "and God has visited His people!" Again, they knew only God could have done this. And maybe they're beginning to connect the dots here that Jesus is God in human form - fully God, yet fully man - or that God is at work in Him and through Him, probably the latter.

So, verse 17, "This report concerning Him" - concerning Jesus - "went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district." Don't you know that this word spread like wildfire? Don't you know that everyone who lived in

Judea, which is the entire land of Israel the way it's used here, that everyone in the entire nation heard about this, and the surrounding district, on the periphery. No, this was shock and awe what Jesus did.

You and I will never live to see a miracle like this. But it does give us great encouragement because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and no situation is ever impossible as long as Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father. And so whatever is going on in your life that seems to be leaving you empty, almost like this mother, pray. And Jesus still can draw near. And Jesus still can, like He touched that coffin, He can touch your life. He can touch the issues of your life. He can change and transform what you perceive needs to be changed in your life.

And this all begins by coming to the place in your life where you enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, where you see who Christ is. You come to learn that He is the virgin-born Son of God who lived a sinless and perfect life, who went to the cross and there was lifted up to die, and the sins of all the people who would ever believe in Him were transferred to Him, and He died bearing the sins of sinners. It's the only means by which we may have access to God. He was taken down from the cross, He was buried in a borrowed tomb, and on the third day, God raised Him from the dead. This is the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And so, if you have never believed in Jesus Christ, if you have never come to the place of committing your life to Christ, taking that decisive step of faith and entrusting your life to Him, then I call you today to do this. You desperately need to do this. You need to be saved. You need to be saved from the wrath of God that will be poured out on the last day. You need to be saved from a real place of eternal destruction in a place called hell. You need to be rescued. You need to be delivered. This is not just putting a plus on your grade, this is the entirety of what needs to happen in your life. And so if you have never come to this place as a decision of your will to believe in Jesus Christ, then I urge you to do so today.

[Prayer] Father in heaven, thank You for this passage. Thank You for the miracle that was performed so long ago. We believe it. We believe it because we believe in Jesus Christ. We believe it because it's recorded in the Word of God. We believe it because we believe God in You, that nothing is impossible with You. And so, I pray that even this miracle that we have observed today will increase our faith. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. [End]

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." God bless you.