

The Hand of the Lord Who Raises the Dead

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Luke 7:11-17 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.

Last week we heard how Jesus touched a leper and not only healed him but also cleansed him. Normally if one touches an unclean leper, that person would become unclean himself. Not so with Jesus. He touches the leper and the leper becomes clean.

Today that same hand meets death itself. In such encounters it is always death who wins. Life cannot prevail against death, not that is until the coming of Jesus. Just like uncleanness gave way before the hand of the Lord, so also in our text this evening death itself gives way before the hand of the Lord.

The hand of the Lord has the authority to heal and more than that the authority to raise the dead. We consider tonight the hand of the Lord who raises the dead.

Death gives way before the Lord of Life

Our text this evening tells us of two groups that are coming together. The first is coming out of the city. They are led by the casket of a dead boy and his grieving widow mother. This widow has already lost her husband and now her only son. The sadness of death is great enough on its own, but now the widow has no one to support her. She will likely have no choice but to beg at the city gates. As is normal, the city mourns with her. Whatever good news or joy these people may have been experiencing it is put on hold. Death has that effect on our life.

The second group, however, is led by the Lord of Life. Jesus has been teaching the people the words of life. He has already done many miracles, healed the sick, cast out demons and cleansed the lepers. Many people follow him

wanting just to touch him. The people are full of excitement and amazement.

What happens when these two groups meet? Normally the excitement and life of the one group would become subdued in the face of the tragedy of death. Normally death would win out, but not so when Jesus leads.

In Nigeria they generally don't have stop lights. Instead, when two cars come together at an intersection, the less important is supposed to give way to the more important. Our text tonight tells us about two processions. Which one will give way? Normally death wins, but not so with the Lord of life.

Jesus touches the young man and death is defeated. Death gives way before the Lord of Life.

He is greater than Elijah and Elisha

This is not the first time that a dead body has been raised from the dead. Elijah was sent to the widow of Zarephath. While he was staying with her, her son died. Elijah prayed over the dead boy's body and God gave him back his life. Similarly, also Elisha prayed on top of the dead body of the son of the Shunammite woman, and the boy received back his life. Therefore, when Jesus heals this young man the people recognize the hand of a prophet like Elijah and Elisha.

"Surely a great prophet has risen among us."

But there is a big difference between the healings done by Elijah and Elisha on the one hand and Jesus on the other. In their case they prayed, and the hand of the Lord gave life to the dead. In Jesus case it is his hand which touches the dead boy and gives him life.

The Lord is more than a prophet. This is God himself who took on flesh and became man in order to do battle with death.

When John the Baptist hears what happened he sends word to Jesus, "**Are you the one we are waiting for?**" The answer of course is yes. Jesus is more than a great prophet; He is the Lord of life and his hands give life even to the dead.

These resurrections are only a shadow of what is to come

He gave life to this young man, Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus, but these resurrections were only temporary. All these people died again. Jesus' true confrontation with death comes not outside the gates of Nain, but outside the gates of Jerusalem, when he hung on the cross for our sins. On the hill of calvary Jesus truly did battle with death and death gave way forever before the hand of the Lord of life.

The resurrections during the time of Elijah and Elisha, even those which Jesus himself did were only a foreshadowing of the true resurrection of our Lord Jesus on the first easter morning.

1 Corinthians 15:45 so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

He still touches our lives to give us life

Our lives are not unlike that procession of death coming out of the city of Nain. The Lutheran funeral rite reminds us "**the sorrow of death is great and it reaches every heart and every man.**" Because all have sinned therefore all are subject to death and there is nothing that we can do to stop it.

But the hand of the Lord who raises the dead is not absent from our lives. Tonight, once again the hand of the Lord touches our life, as it touched us in our baptism and as it touches us whenever we hear his word. And just as night gives way to day, and darkness to the light of the sun, so also death gives way before the hand of the Lord.

Joh 5:21 "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

The hand of the Lord has washed away our sin and given us life. On the last day that hand will touch us once again and give us life in his name.