

## **I SAY, ARISE**

Is there an ache in your heart today? Grieving the loss of a loved one? Jesus gives eternal hope in today's passage from Luke 7:11-15, as Luke continues to present the divine authority and ability of the promised Christ, the Deliverer. It's one of His most astounding miracles.

**GRIEVING WIDOW** - Luke writes: He went to a town called Nain, and His disciples and a great crowd went with Him. As He drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "*Do not weep.*" Few things are as disturbing to people as death.

Christian author Joe Bayly knows the incredible pain of losing a child, three times over. "Of all deaths," he writes, "that of a child is most unnatural and hardest to bear. When a child dies, part of the parents is buried too." Grief over death is an ancient ache in our soul.

**WHY DEATH?** - "The world around us is full of sorrow, sickness, pain, infirmity. Poverty, labor, trouble abound on every side," notes JC Ryle. "Sin is the root to which all must be traced. There would be no death without sin." Sin is disobedience to the command and character of God.

Sin originated with the disobedience of the progenitors of the human race. Adam takes the blame for the first sin, but every human freely sins. Romans 5:12 explains, "*sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned.*"

"Without sin there would be no tears, cares, illness, death, funerals," continues Ryle. "Instead of loving sin, cleaving to it, dallying with it, excusing it, playing with it, we ought to hate sin with deadly hatred. And thank God there is remedy for sin in the gospel of Jesus Christ."

**WHO CARES?** - In the midst of a great crowd sympathizing with her loss, the grieving mother is quite alone. She has already lost her husband's companionship, status and income. Women were trained to run a household, not for an occupation. Losing her son, she again had lost her protector and provider. She was now in a desperate situation.

God is the father of the fatherless and protector of widows, says Psalm 68:5. Deuteronomy 27:19 commands God's people to care for widows and orphans via their tithe. Rabbis encouraged widows to remarry. Luke 20:47 rebukes religious leaders for taking advantage of widows.

James 1:27 says "*religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.*" This means to meet their needs, not as hearers only but doers of Jesus' words. Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 5:3-16 provides for the care of Christian widows and orphans. This is done first by the family and then through the church. (Passing off this duty to government is a false argument which takes advantage of compassion of cultural Christians).

**COMPASSION** - In Zechariah 7:9-13 God says to show kindness and mercy, to not oppress the widow, orphan and poor, nor devise evil against one another: "*but they refused to pay attention.*" When Jesus saw this widow, He stopped in compassion, and said, "*Do not weep.*"

Jesus had just taught His disciples to do for others what you want them to do for you. One of the best ways to minister is to empathize with their emotions and situation. Just being with them and weeping with them is one of the most powerful things you can do: "*Weep with those who weep*" (Romans 12:15). But when Jesus says "*do not weep*" it is because He will act.

**THE ONLY SON** - Jesus came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. According to Numbers 19:11-22, to touch a dead body required ritual cleansing. It is a reminder of the defilement of sin, which is the reason there is death. Yet Jesus is not defiled by death.

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. This is the selfless compassion of Jesus the Christ, the Lord of life. His words completely changed the world for the widow, her son, and all who read of it.

The One who spoke the world into existence also gives life by the breath of His mouth. Amazing! "God is alert to the cries of those who mourn," notes RC Sproul, "and He promises to bring comfort, and ultimately to wipe away every tear from our eyes." Thank God for His grace! ☐