

"MINISTRY OF COMPASSION"

Luke 7:11-15

Who has not seen a funeral? Who has not buried a friend?

We have looked at a happy occasion in family life and examined the aching heart of the bereaved from birth to aged.

What can be done when the hard, troubled times come?

What can be done when a child rebels or is arrested?

What can be done in marriage conflict?

What can be done when a child is born with a birth defect?

What can be done when mental illness strikes?

What can be done in the face of deep sorrow?

Officials remind us that 90% of American young people, aged 13-16, commit crimes for which they might be arrested if they were caught.

One angry teenage boy set fire to the offices of the high school. The Fire Department put it out before major damage. His father begged police to let him stand trial, and face sentencing instead of his son.

The offer was refused, the son was imprisoned.

In our sermon today, we have chosen an incident that happened in Nain. This town was not far from Shunern, where Elisha, as the story runs, raised another widow's son. 2 Kings. 4:18-37.

Luke 7 tells the situation of life giving power. Here in the village of Nain is illustrated an answer to our weeping! We face death linked with the presence of Jesus, who said he came to give life. John 10:10.

Visualize three events in the village. First, Ageless Affliction. Second, Authoritative Action. Third, Applying Compassion.

## I. AGELESS AFFLICTION

### 1. Sorrowful Past - V. 12.

"She was a widow" - what a story that little statement reveals. The scene of her husband's death bed, the heart-rendering part, the mournful funeral, and the dread loneliness that followed. Her whole world had been blackened with the cloud of widowhood.

These were by-gone sorrows - perhaps time had been merciful and some of the sharp edge had rubbed off. Some of the wound had healed.

### 2. Better Present

"Now her dead son was being carried out."

Another season of trial has come upon this woman, sorrow spread over her sky,

as once more she is face to face with death.

### 3. Hopeless Future

This was the end of her world.

The simple sentence about this funeral tells of the ageless affliction. "He was his mother's only son and she was a widow."

The source of her comfort has been cut off. She is now without hope, having no promise, utterly cast down.

"Never morning wore to evening  
But some heart did break."

Shelley writes his lament for Keats --

"As long as skies are blue and fields are green,  
Evening must usher night, night urge the marrow,  
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow."

Every person in the sound of my voice has had, or will soon face this ageless affliction!

## II. AUTHORITATIVE ACTION

The nearer she comes to the grave the nearer does she come to the life-giving Saviour

The darkest hour is the hour before daybreak.

The sorrow that endures for a night shall be turned into joy in the morning when Jesus comes.

Jesus meets the funeral - life and death meet!

This woman met Heavenly strength.

What are the results?

V. 13 - Expression of sympathy - "And when the Lord saw her, his love of heart flowed out to her."

Remember she is a stranger to his sympathy, but He is no stranger to her sorrow. He knew about the sting of human suffering.

V. 13B - Jesus spoke an unusual word of comfort - "And he said unto her, weep not."

Weep not - don't weep!

Do you think these words were mockery?

Does he not know this woman has lost her husband, and this is the dead son of the widow?

We may dry our tears at His bidding, no matter how bitter they may be.

Luke says, Jesus took authoritative action!

V. 14 - A Timely Touch.

"He touched the bier and they that bare him stood still."

A little longer and he would have been buried out of sight. They were carrying him off to the grave. Dramatic moment - a touch of power.

V. 14B - Command of Authority

"Young man, I say unto Thee, arise!"

"I tell you - rise up."

That is not a suggestion - that is a command!

Who is this that commands the dead to rise up?

Of course it was our Lord who always spoke with authority - a command for action.

Observe to whom Jesus was addressing this command. He's literally ordering a dead man to return to life. His authority prevails over not only life but death!

Plenty of proof is found for his authority. Look at Mark 5:4 "Little girl, rise, I tell you." In John 11:43 "Lazarus, come out!"

I have a question for you.

"Where does Jesus need to speak with authority in your life?"

What is the dead area in your life that needs His life giving presence.

Let me illustrate:

There is a man who is betraying his wife. He isn't happy about it but, in his own strength, he does not have the stamina to return to fidelity. He, as well as the one who tempts him, can only walk that road under the authority of Christ.

Here is a college student and the drug habit has him. By himself he is powerless to break the almost invincible chains that bind him. Christ alone has the authority to bring such freedom.

Here is a member of the church. He has for a long time been playing church, instead of being Christian that he scarcely recognized the difference between counterfeit and consecration. He needs the authority of Christ to bring him to dynamic reality.

W. E. Sangster for many years was minister of Westminster Hall, London.

While he was still a young minister, he heard about a great spiritual awakening sweeping a certain city. Sangster went to that city to investigate the rumors of victorious renewal. Approaching a policeman he asked, "Where is the religious revival taking place?" The answer was immediate. "Under these buttons, Laddie, under these buttons."

Our Lord can give us the spirit of triumph. You notice I said "us". So many times we sit in our pew and say that would be fine for the other fellow!

Jesus is dealing with an individual and he can deal with your sins, your sorrows, the dead prayerless areas in your life.

Thus far, in our sermon we have touched on the ageless affliction of a widow, and the authoritative action of Jesus.

### III. APPLYING COMPASSION

How tremendously important is this!

In fact it is urgent - Paul says the greatest is love.

Mark 6:34 - "Describes the essential in the life of Jesus." He saw a great crowd, and his heart went out to them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd." Oh, the compassion of Jesus.

A young girl was put on a plane. Her name and grandmother's name and address were tied to her sleeve. She was retarded.

Some one said, "I was deeply moved as I watched the concern of two stewardesses on duty for that precious handicapped child."

They gave her more ministry than church leaders give members in the area where they serve.

I don't think there is any sorrow like the chronic sorrow of a family with a defective child, because the grief does not go away.

T. B. Maston, professor Southwestern Seminary, wrote a book about his handicapped son, Tom Mc.

He and Mrs. Maston discovered early that Tom Mc had been seriously injured at birth. They took him to many doctors. Doctor after Doctor said, "We do not know anything that can be done for him. All you can do is take him home and give him the best possible care."

And they have done that for more than 50 years.

They are convinced that God speaks through suffering.

They have discovered some spiritual gifts, some understanding, deep obedience, patience, a sense of humility.

They have a deepened fellowship with God and have found the capacity to wait on God.

They continue to pray while placing their lives into the compassionate hands of Jesus.

These special parents have faced the mystery of life without all the answers.

These parents are applying compassion.

Mark 9:29 - Jesus in his compassion for an epileptic youth noted the difficulty with authority saying, "This kind of possession cannot be driven out by anything but prayer." Help is available Jesus was saying.

Very quickly now.



V. 15 - (A wondrous change) - "He that was dead sat up, and began to speak."

What a change! His life giving word brings! A minute ago, he is cold.  
Helpless, silent - now aglow - new life.

He is able to testify by speech to his resurrection power. He is a new creature.

V. 15B - (Happy reunion.)

"He delivered him to his mother."

Praise God, for the compassion and tenderness of Jesus. He gave the son back to the broken-hearted widow.

A foretaste of Heaven - this my son was dead now he is alive and we are reunited in fellowship and joy.

Death has been conquered and loved ones meet each other again in the presence of the living God.

V. 16 - Note the God-honoring result.

"There came a fear on all, and they glorified God."

Those who follow Jesus will always have cause for glorifying God.

"God has visited his people."

Jesus had applied compassion - weep not - don't weep and he delivered the young son to his mother.

Have you experienced the compassion of Jesus in your life? Has he given you life? Has he removed the death of sin and saved your soul? Are there things in your life that cause God grief today? How is your relationship with God and with your fellow man? One of the biggest misunderstandings we have about the Christian life is thinking we can get along with God and not get along with each other. But that is a lie; it is impossible to love God if you hate your brother. Jesus gave us a New Commandment in John 13:34-35. "That ye love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye shall love one another."

Jesus applied compassion to this mother's pain.

John Porter preached in Vietnam. Here is a copy of a letter he received:

Dear Chaplin,

I ain't much with words and I get a little tongue-tied when I try to say what I mean about something that's really important. I'd like to say this to you face-to-face, but maybe I can do it better in a letter. First off, you know the kind of guy I've been . . . I'm not gonna try to hide that. Everybody in the unit knows ole Gus, the big man, that's what I've tried to be. I guess I've fooled about everybody. The only thing really big about me has been my bluff. But, Chaplin, you and God saw through me and you made me see myself, and what I saw made me sick. You showed me one thing. I talked a lot about the hell of Vietnam. It was in me. I didn't find it over here; I brought it with me. Chaplin, I don't know how to pray, but last night I told God to count me in. I've been such a slob I didn't want to ask a regular preacher like you to

to baptize me, so when nobody was watching I baptized myself in the creek. When I prove that I ain't kidding about all this, I want you to do it again the way it should be done.

A member of God's team

Gus

John Porter said "Before the letter reached me, Gus had been killed."

It was the Chaplain's compassion that made new life possible for Gus.

It was Jesus' compassion that gave new life to the boy.

Are you and I sharing God's new life with others? Each must give an account. God will ask me for an account. He will ask you for an account. It all begins with submission to the Lord. This is important because then God controls our lives.