

✠ Luke 7:11-17 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

Jesus is either the Son of God or a raving mad lunatic. Who tells a mother who has lost her son not to weep? Who touches the coffin of a dead man and makes himself unclean to his people? Who has a conversation with the dead, as if the dead were alive and could hear and respond to him? Certainly, those of us who have heard about and believe the miracles and life of Jesus don't bat an eye at this odd turn of events. But to the one who has not heard, to the one who does not know, this is backwards and foolish, the actions of a crazy person.

Yet that is the way of God. God takes the fool and makes him wise. He takes the dead and gives him life. He turns the liar into a truth-teller when the liar says, "I am a liar." He makes the blind to see and deaf to hear. He walks on water. He feeds five thousand with five loaves of bread and two fish. He knows which fish have money in their mouths, yet sends His own disciples out without any means to support themselves.

Two crowds met that day: one following death, the other following life. The dead were leaving the city of the living to go out to the place of the dead, while the living came from the place of the dead to enter the land of the living. Those who bore the dead man in his coffin became as though they were dead; standing still; while the one who was dead became as one living as he sat up and spoke with the breath of life in him. Foolishness.

But God does not bend to meet our ideas of reason and logic. If He did then we are indeed in trouble for God is a jealous God, demanding justice and perfect righteousness. Yet who among us has not sinned even this day before we wiped the sleep from our eyes? Who among us does not have a mind that wonders to our little Danish Delights of pet sins and secret pleasures? Even now as we pretend to be listening to God's Word?

Those who bore witness to this miracle were seized with fear. Fear because a great Prophet of God was in their midst. God had indeed visited His people. They wept as if death were more powerful than God. Having been proved wrong, they now feared God more than death. Fear is the response of one who has done something wrong or is cornered by a more powerful enemy. The people were afraid because they knew God was holy and that they were unholy. They knew that God was just and they were sinners. They knew that God was vengeful and that they had not heeded His law.

They were like the five virgins whose oil had run out before the bridegroom came. They were like the tenant entrusted with one coin, against whom the Master's anger burned because he did not invest it. They were caught with their hands in the cookie jar. Here was one who came from God, indeed was God, and they had not expected that He could conquer death.

Like the widow Elijah had helped, no doubt this widow face to face with Jesus, along with the crowd, knew that she was a gross sinner who God was punishing by taking away her only son. No doubt that she and the crowd knew the wages of sin.

But God is not like that. He does not delight in the death of a sinner but rather desires that

the sinner turn and be saved from death. God is compassionate, loving His enemies and doing good to those who hurt Him. The dead man was certainly a sinner, as was his grieving mother, but Jesus showed the compassion and mercy of God. Though they both deserved death, Jesus granted life. The Virgin's Son met the widow's son and He became like a sponge for her tears and as life for the death of her son. Death turned about in its den and turned its back on the Victorious One.

God does not give the wage of sin to the one who deserves it – you. Instead He gives the wage of sin to the One who does not deserve it but is able to pay. Those who cry out, “Life isn't fair” are right. It is not fair that you should live while our Lord should die. It is not fair that you get off scot-free while the Innocent One marches to the gallows. It is not fair that your sins are not reckoned to you but to the One who is without sin. Repent.

Jesus raised the dead man as if to say, “Death is not yours to have, that is why I have come: to die that you may live.” He touched the coffin, not merely to stop the procession, but to change hearts. The coffin did not make Him unclean. He made the coffin clean.

Yet He did not simply restore life; He took death into Himself where death itself would die. He rendered the tomb powerless and death impotent. He showed the compassion and love of God by reversing the effects of sin and giving back to those who do not have and do not deserve. Such is the compassion the Lord Jesus Christ has on you. He has seen you being carried out in a coffin, fit only for burial, and has placed His hand upon you, pouring the life-giving water over your dead soul, saying to you, “Arise. My life for yours.”

Our Lord Jesus loves you and cares for you. He has taken your sins, your rebellion, your lies, your cheating heart, your devilish gossip, and your petty hatred and has replaced them with His life. He says to you, “Do not weep.” And then proceeds to undo that which makes you weep.

But it is not only that He takes all that from you. It is also that gives to you His Spirit whereby He makes your tongue praise God, your heart to trust in God, your mind to know God, and your life to worship God. Thus you glorify God and God glories in you. You are His craftsmanship and His delight. You are the apple of His eye and He, like a loving parent, lavishes upon you the riches of His glory, giving to you the Body and Blood of His Son; heavenly food for the children of God, forgiving your sins and counting you righteous.

Such is the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus: giving to the undeserving and loving the unlovable. Let the world think you dead and useless, ready to bury you under its evil desires and perverse intentions. God has set His Son apart before the foundations of the world to carry your sin and to be your salvation.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠