

JESUS IS READY TO HELP.

Luke 7:11–17

¹¹ Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹² As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” ¹⁴ Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. ¹⁶ They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” ¹⁷ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

All the miracles that Jesus performed had similarities. They all show us his almighty power and his compassionate love and his concern for people, Jew and Gentile alike. In other ways they are all unique depending on the situation that called for a miracle in the first place. Last week, for example, we heard from a man that Jesus never saw, a Gentile who asked for help only Jesus could give. His servant was dying. His faith exceeded his need to see Jesus heal his servant. Other miracles called for an illustration of what he was doing, like when he healed a man who couldn’t hear or speak. That man and the people there could see that Jesus was about to do something that involved hearing and speaking. The miracle that Luke presents to us today is also different. None one asked Jesus for help. No one pleaded for a miracle. You almost wonder whether anyone was paying attention to Jesus at all. He just happened to be in a place at a particular time and he shows us that he is ready to help. That’s what we want to see and that’s what we want to learn from. Jesus not only performed a powerful miracle, he left us some examples too. Obviously only Jesus can do what Jesus did, but we can learn from why he did it. Maybe we can learn to be ready to help as we see with this miracle that **JESUS IS READY TO HELP.**

1. In the southern part of Galilee Jesus entered a city called Nain. He happened to be there on what turned out to be a very sad day as well as a day filled with opportunities for Jesus to show his compassion as well as his power. A sad procession of people, maybe a big part of the city population was walking down the road with a woman walking beside he dead son. Men were carrying the bier, the stretcher on their way outside the city. What lay ahead was a sad burial with more than enough reason for the sadness. This mother who lost her son was a widow. Who knows how long before this she had lost her husband. What we might not understand made it even worse. A widowed woman at that time had lost her only means of support. She would be dependent on the kindness of people to help her or just beg for the little she needed to survive.

It seems that as the group walked by Jesus could just stand with his disciples and watch. But that didn’t mean there was nothing he could do. Jesus stopped the procession. He went to the woman and probably others who were crying at this loss and told them not to cry. If we were saying that we would only be able to give whatever comfort we can give. That may not be nearly enough to make a person stop crying, but Jesus had more that he could do and without being asked, he did it. He told the young

man the young man to get up. That's what he did. He sat up and began to speak to his mother and those around him.

What could we do that follows the example of Jesus? We all know our limitations, but that doesn't mean there is nothing we can do. If we could see that crowd we would know that it was a sad procession. We would know that this woman had lost her son. We would have a good idea that she was a widow. If she weren't a widow her husband would likely have been with her/. In short we could care enough to want to follow Jesus' example and do whatever we can do to help. In situations like this you have probably done that. You have probably sympathized, offered to help, helped in the ways you can. Now let's take that the next step. Think about what needs to be done here at Christ the Vine. Think of what you are committing yourselves to do as you welcome your new pastor. You are saying that you will welcome him to lead you to do the work that we have the privilege of doing here. You are not welcoming him to do the work for you. You are not welcoming him to pay the bills, to find his own support, to make all the visits, and show all the care of the congregation. You are promising to do that with him. A sainted pastor I knew very well used to say, "I'll starve with you, but I won't starve for you." We are in this together. In order to find out what we can do we need to take the time and pray to see what needs to be done. We don't have to have the almighty power of Jesus to do that. We just need to care enough to do the work. We can be like Jesus to that extent. **JESUS IS READY TO HELP.** We need to be ready too.

2. It was compassion for this widow that prompted Jesus to go to that stretcher and tell the dead son of this widow to get up. It was his power that allowed him to give life back to this man whose life had been over up to that time. The people recognized that this was power that had to rest with God. They acknowledged Jesus' miracle as something on God could accomplish. Was Jesus the prophet people thought he was? No! He is much more than that. Had God come to help his people as they said? Absolutely! Besides the compassion and power that Jesus showed he was also giving a message to the people that said God is at work here. God has shown his love. God has shown his power here. That is a power that goes far beyond human power, far beyond out power. We can't raise the dead although there have probably been times that we wished we had the power to give life. God has reserved that for himself. All we can do is end a life and God keeps that for himself too and those to whom he gives the authority. Otherwise the word for ending a life without God's permission is something God forbids. So is there anything we can learn from this for ourselves and our lives? Absolutely.

We can do what Jesus did as we evaluate what is within our capability to do. We can evaluate how we can get involved in work that needs to be done with the abilities and other gifts that God has given us. How important is God's work in your life? Where on the scale of importance does our work as Christians fall? Are we doing what we can or should we think about whether we can do more with our time, our abilities, our support, our prayers, our money? That is something all of us need to evaluate more than just once a year or so. We can't only evaluate what we can do when we have a new pastor. We all need forgiveness for not taking the time, but we also trust Christ's forgiveness for our weakness and look to him to move us and enable us to do more. As we think about how we can be ready to help in many situations we can take comfort knowing that **JESUS US READY TO HELP.**