

Luke 7:11-17

Summer is a time of projects. Sometimes summer projects involve restoring old or broken things. An antique piece of furniture might need a new coat of finish. A favorite chair might need fresh padding, right where it sees action the most. Restoring something can be difficult work. It takes patience and dedication to devote countless hours before you see any real progress. To strip and stain, dig and decorate takes a steady resolve to continue working...no matter what. Restoration is difficult work whether it's around the house or in the garage. But restoring something also brings with it a feeling of immense accomplishment. You have that old family heirloom that now, after being restored, doesn't have to sit in the attic collecting dust. You can finally take the old family 1955 Chevy Belaire for a spin around the block, and not worry about it breaking down on you. You have something back, almost as good as new. The widow at Nain knew what it was like to have something broken and in need of restoration. Her life was no doubt broken, as we shall see today. But this account is not so much about her or her son—it's about the One who stepped into her life (& ours too), the One who stepped in to make an eternal difference. The Gospel of Luke points out: **Christ Restores What Death Destroys, 1. Hear his voice in Death, and 2. Lift your voice in Life.**

1. Hear his voice in Death

After healing the centurion's servant in Capernaum, Jesus traveled a few miles south to a small village called Nain. The Lord of Life is still in Galilee at this time and he's leading a procession. He has his disciples with him and a large crowd is following along. But another large crowd was coming out of Nain. At the head of this procession was a coffin, carrying the lifeless body of the only son of a widow. Death was at the head of this procession and with a small city gate to pass through *Life would meet Death at the gates of Nain.*

As Jesus approached the city, he took note of the large crowd with the grieving widow. "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.'" First, we see Jesus as the LORD of this whole situation. He is the true God leading the procession of Life and he saw the widow, walking in the procession, no children beside her, no husband holding her hand ~ all alone. Jesus saw her great need. His heart went out to her. The Lord was filled with compassion for this woman who had lost so much, suffered so much, and needed so much. Her situation moved him to act. Jesus told her, "Don't cry." Simple words of comfort came from our Lord. "Weep no more, dry those tears," he said. His words are not a rebuke, "Nock it off!" but rather his words are a promise to heal and restore. Jesus will give the reason to stop crying. Trust in him. **Hear his voice in Death.**

Jesus was not done talking to this funeral procession. He spoke to the young man. He spoke as if the young man were already alive. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" Jesus' voice has the power to restore. **Hear his voice in the midst of this death!** The death which had claimed this young man's life had claim on him no longer. Jesus was there to heal what death had destroyed.

"The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother." Luke's description almost makes you laugh with excitement. Dead people don't sit up on their own. Dead people don't start talking to those around them. Yet, that's exactly what happened! Jesus had reversed the effect of death and this young man had his voice back again. **He had heard Jesus' voice**, which brought him back to life. THEN, "Jesus gave him back to his mother." Why is this included? Wouldn't we naturally assume that if the young man was alive, his mother would have him back almost as good as new? These words are included because **Christ Restores what Death Destroys.** The hurting mother hurts no more because Jesus has returned

her son to life. The family relationship, the economic stability, the lost loved one—all these are restored by the Savior.

God's Word calls Death the "king of terrors" (Job 18:14). Death is a reality *at the end* of every human life. In this account from Luke we see physical death. This is the same physical death we see with loved ones and acquaintances throughout our entire lives. Cancer wages war on the body, pneumonia strikes even in the summer, all because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Death is the king of terrors. The terror of death is a summary of all the terror sin brings into our world. You don't need to be on your deathbed to be afraid. You don't need to lose a loved one to know sadness. These are seen most poignantly in physical death, but they also come at different times. When there is bitterness between family members, when depression lurks around every alone time, when Satan reminds us of past failures, Death demands to be heard as it brings its terrors.

But Christ speaks more boldly. He speaks a message of compassion and power to us all. The same care and concern he showed for the widow at Nain, he shows for you and me. When you are depressed or distraught, shocked or shut-in, God sees your need and he acts. When the procession of Death comes into your life, **Hear his voice of comfort.** "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Death has lost its sting. Our Savior has reversed the effects of Death in our lives and even at the end of our lives. By his perfect sin-free and thus death-free living, Jesus has secured a new reality for us: LIFE. Restoring our relationship with God wasn't easy. It cost him everything he had—even his body and blood shed for you. Because he is the perfect sacrifice **Christ restores what Death destroys.** Hear his voice in Death: "Rise and live. You are free from your sins and the power of Death." That is power for life right now—and we look forward to hearing his voice one day: "Come you blessed by my Father! Enjoy eternal rest in heaven!"

2. Lift your voice in Life

The recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has been making the headlines lately, concerning everyone from the President to the local fisherman. Imagine if every drop of oil was miraculously cleaned up. How would people react if every speck of crude oil vanished from the waters and beaches of the Gulf coast? Naturally, the people would be amazed; the scientists would be dumbfounded; and there would be celebration upon celebration. The news organizations would be filled to the brim with analysts and excitement. Positive messages of joy and thanks would fill the airways. So, when our Savior Christ Restores what Death destroys, there's only one way we want to respond: **Lift our voice in Life!**

Take a look at how the people surrounding Jesus reacted to the miracle of Life: "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.'" The crowd's reaction seems sincere, doesn't it? They were filled with awe, meaning they had fear and respect for the great power they had just witnessed. They praised God and gave him glory, because no mere man can raise the dead! They seem like pretty good people.

But their voices fell short of what God wants. "A great prophet" is not the same as THE great prophet God had promised. They acknowledged God's working here and his help, but they didn't connect that working to Jesus as the one true Messiah and Savior. They fell short of lifting their voice to confess who Jesus truly was – the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

The people of Nain aren't the only ones who've seen miracles. You and I live in a world of God's miracles. We can call them miracles of nature and miracles of grace. There are miracles of nature, such as Jesus calming the water or a modern day healing of a disease that

doctors can't explain. But there are also those miracles of grace, such as the new life God grants through Baptism. Next Sunday we're going to have two more children baptized and brought into God's family. There is the miracle of God's body and blood in-with-and-under the bread and wine of Holy Communion, given for the forgiveness of our sins. There is the miracle of forgiveness within families: child says to parent "I'm sorry" and parent says to child "I forgive you" – all because Christ has forgiven us!

Yet how do we react to these miracles? Do we go home from worship, filled with the faith in Jesus' forgiveness, bursting forth with how great our God is? Or do we have the reaction of awe for a time... then we simply get used to it. "Yeah, Pastor announced forgiveness to me again; how many times haven't I heard that!" Just like the people of Nain, we are tempted to be amazed but then to fall short with our voices.

Look to God's grace in Christ! His power and new life are worth lifting your voice! They say medical breakthroughs are increasing the lifespan of your average American. Currently the average age for a man is 78 years old, while women on average live to be 81. Some experts project that in a few decades, the average lifespan might reach well past 100 years old. What do we as believers know about life-spans? We know what Jesus said: "Whoever lives and believes in me will never die." You and I will not face the spiritual death that awaits those who don't believe in Christ as the only Savior. You and I will live forever with God. Imagine the newsflash: "People Live Longer when connected to Jesus!" Yes, we'd have to explain that a bit, but we DO live longer when we believe in Jesus. We live longer because we have eternal life in God's one and only Son. That's news we will be excited about. That a reason to **Lift your voice in Life.**

We have each been given a time of grace by our God. As the death and funeral this weekend of our 28 year old Hmong member Mao Lee reminds us: life is the time in which we come to trust Jesus as our Restoring Lord. Life is a gift of grace. It is the time in which we can also lift up our voice and let others know about this restoration in Christ. We are a part of God's procession of Life, all because our Lord Jesus is full of compassion for us. We are part of a victory parade because **Christ restores all things.** Amen.

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