

Luke 7:11-17

Pentecost 3, Supplement Series C, June 5, 2016

Theme: Jesus is all the Savior we need

- I. He has compassion on us
- II. He has power over death

INJ King Solomon was the wisest person ever. He didn't have letters after his name from a graduate school, but God gave him understanding and insight and the gift to use it for good. He wrote about the things he discovered and observed in the book of Ecclesiastes. He considers science and history and economics and business. His theme is surprising: "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." His point is not the post-modern philosophy of our wacky world, but he is making a contrast: The one thing that is meaningful is the Savior. Trusting Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life is more important than an education, or a job, or a person. Everything is meaningless if you don't know Jesus.

Yet we spend so much of our time and energy on less important things and often neglect the one thing that is needed. Consider how much thought and effort you used this last week on your finances. How much time you spent using social media or watching a screen. Measure any number of your activities and then compare them with your attention to God's Word. What Solomon calls meaningless takes up almost all our time, while the priceless gospel of Jesus gets so little.

There is a proper balance between the necessary things of life and essential spiritual matters. Jesus once warned about focusing on the one without the other. He said that God takes care of the birds and makes frail flowers stunningly beautiful. Won't he much more supply what you need – you whom he has bought with the Savior's blood and made an heir of heaven? Don't worry! Jesus urges us, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." Our Gospel Reading reminds us that Jesus is all the Savior we need. He has compassion on us and he has power over death.

The setting has Jesus traveling across the countryside with celebrity status. People were curious to see this preacher who did amazing things. A crowd followed him as they headed towards a small town called Nain. I want you to think about what it would be like if you were walking in that crowd. What would you be thinking about? What would be on your mind? I might wonder about the weather. Plan what I would have for lunch. Listen to Jesus for a while. Have some fun with the people walking along. There

could be the drama from people whose emotions get hurt. Some would probably need to be corrected. Others would need encouragement. Traveling with Jesus would make certain times and places intentionally spiritual, but wouldn't there be lots of times that were just secular life?

Perhaps our daily walking along with Jesus is lacking in intensity. We were confirmed, so we know the right stuff – and we think we don't need to make it our priority to hear and learn God's Word. Everything else in life moves quickly, but Jesus stays the same. Does that mean we can ignore him? The issues of politics and health and wealth and relationships are demanding and tiring and they drive us nuts. Worship and reading the Bible and teaching the children about Jesus are too often relegated to the back burner until they disappear for lack of use. We might be connected with the crowd following Jesus, but he doesn't attract much of our attention.

Look out! There is another crowd approaching. Jesus and the disciples were heading into Nain just as a funeral procession was heading out. It was a tragic situation. An only son had died. Mom was a widow. That crowd was wrapped up in grief, wailing and mourning. Change your perspective for a moment and place yourself into this other crowd. What is on your mind now? Death has intruded in a cruel way. You are thinking of major issues – what am I going to do? How can I help this mother? Where will she turn for her needs? Why did this happen?

Perhaps death has crashed into your life. Everything else stops. Whatever was important, now isn't. Health care people take care of some details. The funeral home people guide you through some more. It all goes by in a blur while your mind is reeling. One step at a time, you go through the motions. What will I do? How can I go on? Am I ready to die?

The crowd with the coffin had these serious matters on their mind, but they didn't have Jesus. The crowd with Jesus didn't even consider the nearness of death. When they met at the narrow city gate, it was like two cars meeting on a single lane road, which crowd would back down? Here we are told something amazing about Jesus. "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still."

Jesus had everyone's attention now. He is the celebrity, remember? He has important things to do and people waiting for him. Yet he has time. More than that, he has compassion. His heart went out to this mother who lost her child. He hurt for the crowd so concerned with the impact death had made. He could help. He would help. Before he did anything, though, he showed compassion. He spoke tenderly to the grieving mother. He understood her pain and sorrow. He felt for her distress.

By showing compassion, Jesus reveals himself as the Savior who cares for us. He understands our troubles. He has worn our shoes and has felt our emotions and he knows our fears. Jesus will not say, "Hey! Your sins are forgiven, so just suck it up!" Or, "Heaven is your home, so don't sweat the details!" Jesus is our brother, who has taken on our flesh and blood. He has compassion on us.

His compassion sends an important message. Jesus has come to help us. He can meet our needs. He knows exactly what is necessary and he will do it. Jesus' compassion was not only for the crowd with the coffin, either. Their need was obvious, with death staring them in the face. Jesus also had compassion on the crowd accompanying him. He wanted to gain their full attention, too. He had just what they needed, even if they weren't focused on it right now. Jesus showed compassion for the people in both crowds. He has compassion for you and for me.

Does Jesus have your undivided attention yet? He stopped the pallbearers by touching the coffin. He interrupted the flow of both crowds and comforted the grieving widow. Now, he stands there right next to a dead person. What could he do to stop the crying? What could he do to make a difference for every single person there – and here? Jesus showed his power over death and assures us that he is all the Savior we need.

Jesus spoke one simple sentence. He didn't make a show of waving his hands or mumbling mysterious words. He just said the unbelievable and the impossible: "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The boy was dead. He couldn't hear Jesus. He couldn't get up. He couldn't do anything, because he was dead. Jesus, however, has power over death. Jesus is God, by whose almighty word the entire universe was created. His words carry the whole authority of the Triune God. When he commands a dead person to return to life, they return to life!

The boy sat up and began to talk. This was not a medical malpractice case where the boy was merely unconscious for a while and they thought he was dead. No, he was dead. Now, Jesus raised him back to life. That is the power your Savior has. Not even death can defy him!

Think of what that means for you. All your troubles, the fears you have, they are not more powerful than Jesus. Not even death has the last word, because Jesus took the place of every sinner under the curse of death. He went to the cross bearing the full weight of every transgression and he died to pay the wages we had earned for ourselves. He paid the debt with his blood. Jesus died. Really died. For the sins of the world.

Death could not hold Jesus. On the Third Day Jesus used his divine power to rise again. Jesus is no longer dead. He lives! Those who trust Jesus

need not fear even death, for it will not hold us, either. Jesus has won eternal life. Jesus proclaimed new life to the two crowds at Nain. The boy became alive again. Those who trusted Jesus were given the life of faith. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in him will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Jesus will never die.

Death seems so far away most of the time. We spend so much of our time with the crowd coasting along and not paying attention to the important matters of spiritual life and death. Jesus' power over death is not just for the end of our days. We need him to sustain us in every trial. Jesus brought us out of the death of unbelief and raised us to the life of faith; the life that rejoices in the forgiveness of sins. We love to hear his words and to follow his commands. We have a new life in Christ Jesus right now!

Our inattentiveness is forgiven by the compassionate and powerful Savior. So is our laziness and our apathy. Yet, Jesus does not want us to continue to operate on autopilot. He calls us to attentive living as we hear his words. We will live in repentance for our sins. We will strive to change our behavior so it reflects our confidence in Jesus our powerful Savior.

Such a change happened among the people in our lesson. "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.' This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country." They confessed Jesus as their Savior! The people of both crowds joined in one confession: God has come to save sinners.

Their confession was not a private matter, either. The news about Jesus spread far and wide. They had to tell people that Jesus was the only Savior! He has power over sin and death. He gives life even to those who are dead! Don't you want to hear about Jesus? Our bold confession follows theirs. Jesus is all the Savior we need. He has had compassion on us, taking our place in human flesh and under the law. We want to tell about his power to free from sin and raise to life!

The account of Jesus at Nain grabs our attention today because it calls us away from our preoccupation with lesser things. Nothing is more important than daily trusting Jesus and hearing his words, which are the power of God for salvation. Nothing means more than trusting Jesus, so that when we die, we will live forever with him in heaven. Everything else is meaningless, as Solomon said – even our job and our education and our health and our family and any of the details that we get so wrapped up in.

Jesus is all the Savior you need. Rejoice in the perspective given to you today with the crowds at Nain. Jesus gives you life right now, by his word. Listen to him! Your Jesus even gives you life forever. SDG Amen.