

Weaving the Word

The Widow's Son

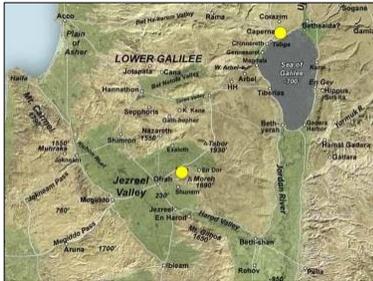
Part 53 – December 6, 2015

Welcome to where we're trying to learn to discern the darkness from light!



Do you know the difference between your home and a hole in the ground? Well, your home is in heaven. And, one of the often repeated scriptural images for this fallen world is a pit of darkness. (Ezek 31:14-18)

When we left off in Capernaum, Jesus had just healed the Centurion's servant. (Luke 7:1-10)



Soon afterward, Jesus went **[about 22 miles south]** to a town called Nain ... **[pronounced Nyne]** – Luke 7:11a NIV

If Capernaum is Bellingham, Nain is Burlington. It's still populated; one of the oldest cities to continue carrying on its ancient name. See the arrow? That's where the church (pictured below it) is supposedly built over the original city gate. And, in the photo below that, is that same church around 1880.



The word, **Nain**, in Greek means, **Beautiful**; and it's from the Hebrew **na'AH** which means, **Meadow of the shepherd's flock, and Throne of God. Sounds like home.**

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green **pastures [na'ah]** ... He restores my soul ... though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me ... – Psalm 23:1-4a NAS



... and [Jesus'] disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out ... – Luke 7:11b-12a NIV



On a coffin plank. Wrapped in a shroud. **Making any who carry or touch it unclean;** (Num 19:11-12) but, the grieving couldn't care less.

It's a collision of opposing forces: the outbound are crying or silently grieving. At their head is the dead. The inbound are laughing and loudly rejoicing. At their head is the Life!

But, they hush and stand wide aside. *Don't want to touch it.*



... the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. **[Neither husband nor sons at her side, for support; the worst of situations – especially then]** And a large crowd from the town was with her. – Luke 7:12b NIV

The pallbearers are thinking, **“One day, they’ll be carrying me out the gate.”**

These are the thoughts we have at funerals, because **we’re forced to face the reality of our mortality, our own march to the grave.**

Who do you relate to here: the **close friends forced to face the fear of death**; the **casual observers trying to avoid death**; or the **mother forced to face the heart-wrenching loss of death**?

Are you prepared for your date at the gate? Do you know what Jesus was facing at the gate? His mortal enemy. He came to take on death on its home court, in the darkness.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**. ... In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ... **The Word [which was God] became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** – John 1:1, 4-5, 14a

The pallbearers pass by Jesus, followed by the sonless widow.

When the Lord saw her, [her emptiness, loneliness, and hopelessness] his heart went out to her ... – Luke 7:13a NIV

Notice that she *doesn’t* cry out for Jesus’ help. **The Lord is moved with compassion by her suffering alone.** Sometimes we get mad at God, blame God, for not intervening on *our* timetable, or giving us the answer our heart *aches* to hear.

But, **it isn’t that He lacks compassion.** It’s that we’re on the dark side of the gate. The pit. The valley of the shadow. **Jesus shows us the Father, and Jesus is moved with compassion.**

... and he said, **“Don’t cry.”** – Luke 7:13b NIV

When we say, **“Don’t cry,”** we mean, **“I wish I could remove the reason for your tears.”** When Jesus said, **“Don’t cry,”** the pain in His eyes, the tears on His cheeks, the compassion, yet confidence in the tone of His voice, said: **“I see your suffering, and it breaks My heart; but, just watch what I can do.”**

Then he **went up [behind the pallbearers]** and **touched [lit. grabbed onto]** the **[open]** coffin, **[Because, He couldn’t care more!]** and those carrying it stood still. He said, **“Young man, I say to you ...** – Luke 7:14a NIV

And *right here* is where everything would go into a surreal slow motion that you’d recall and retell for the rest of your life. **The day two ultimate opposing forces met at the gate.**

They saw Jesus heal, reveal, and deal with demons, but when the gloves came off, **they saw the Light**; and, **instead of the dead making the clean unclean, the Clean made the dead un-dead!**

“... I say to you, **get up!**” [egeirō: “Awake!” “Arise!”] [The separated soul returned to the corpse with such force] The dead man sat up and began to talk ... – Luke 7:14b-15a NIV

We’re not told if the pallbearers lowered or dropped him; but, I think we all know it was an awkward combination of both. What do you suppose he said?! **“What’s going on? Why are we at the gate?”**

... and Jesus gave him back to his mother. – Luke 7:15b NIV

So, what’s it mean when Jesus raises a grieving widow’s son? Well, **it doesn’t mean He’ll intervene whenever we’re hurting**. Let’s face it: **He didn’t raise the widow’s husband!**

He’s got another, better plan. **He doesn’t promise a life free of trials or tears, but He says He’ll restore what was lost through the years, if we trust**. There’s enough tragedy and pain in each life in this room to make us all cry if we had the time and compassion to see it.



So, what’s it mean when He raises a lonely widow’s son?

It means: **you’re not alone**. It means: **you’re not unloved**. It means: **you’re not without hope**.

If God would go to such great lengths to share the sorrow and wipe the tears of one little, sonless, widow in a tiny town, we can’t begin to imagine what awaits at the gates!



In His *hometown*, of Nazareth, Jesus had said to those of little faith: **“There were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time ... Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath.”** (Luke 4:25-26) **At the city gates**. (1 Kings 17:10)

Jesus declares the story, and duplicates the miracle. *Why?*

Mt. Nitai left, likely Jesus’ Nazareth

... Elijah cried to the Lord, “O Lord my God, let this boy’s life return to him!” The Lord heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and ... **He gave him to his mother** ... – 1 Kings 17:21b-23a NIV

... and **Jesus gave him back to his mother**. [Hmm. Would you look at that] They were all filled with **awe** [Phobos: fear; dread; terror] and praised God. – Luke 7:15b-16a NIV

In the order of miracles, there’s something quantifiably different, not to mention terrifying, in *reanimating a corpse*.

“A **great prophet** has appeared among us,” they said. – Luke 7:16b NIV

They're close, but it's so much more than that. *Look at the two stories.*

"God has come to help [episkeptomai: look upon; visit] his people." – Luke 7:16c NIV

Closer; but, this isn't *just* a visit. *Compare the stories! What's the huge difference between the two raisings of the widows sons?*

Elijah prayed and the Lord commanded the dead to rise.

Jesus skips the prayer!

He cuts to the chase and He commands the dead to rise. Even the great prophets had to ask God to do the *work*, which could only mean ... *that He's the One Elijah was praying to!*

So, what's it mean when He raises a widow's dead son?

It means that **One stronger than death, One greater than fate, One more powerful than any suffering that can come ... has come.**

This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. – Luke 7:17 NIV



So, what happened after He raised the son? We don't know. We're not told.

But, we do know what didn't happen: *a burial!*

And, *nobody's unclean*, 'cause nobody's dead!

And, there's a bunch of food and wine waiting for a wake.

And, though it's a huge crowd, *I'll bet it didn't run out.*

When Jesus faces the dead, instead of stepping aside for the grieving, He grabs on, and turns their mourning into dancing.

And, the two opposing processions became one united body, with Christ at the head, leading the once dead back to his house. But not his home, at least, not just then.

Eventually, both mother *and* son were carried back out that gate, on a plank.

Do you know the reason why?

You do ... if, that is, you know the difference between your home and a hole in the ground.

So, whatever you're facing, listen close and you'll hear Him say, *"I see your suffering, and it breaks my heart; but, just watch what I can do."*