

Week 2: Raising the Widow's Son

Preview

This week Jesus heals a sickness no human doctor can cure: death. We'll be looking at what motivated Jesus to help and how we ought to respond.

Text: Luke 7:11–17

¹¹ Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. ¹² As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. ¹³ And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." ¹⁵ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶ Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" ¹⁷ And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

Context and Themes

Luke tells some of the same stories Matthew does, and one of them is about a Roman centurion who believes that Jesus can heal his servant from a distance with just a word. Jesus praises him for his faith and fulfills his request. Now in Nain, Jesus does a greater miracle—raising the dead—out of sheer compassion rather than in response to a request made in faith. In that culture, a widow who lost her only son did not just lose a loved one but her future—her only source of protection and provision. Notice how this story connects back to the one about Elijah mentioned in Week 1. Notice, too, how Luke focuses on the reaction of the crowds rather than the reaction of the widow.

Observe, Interpret, Apply

Observe: What do you notice in our passage?

- Key questions:
 - What does Jesus do here? Try to list each action.
 - What do Jesus's actions teach us about who He is and what He is like?
 - Who benefits from Jesus's ministry here?
 - What feelings and actions characterize the people afterward?
 - Who do the people say Jesus is?

Interpret: What does this passage mean?

- Key clues:
 - Jesus has power over life and death
 - The right response is fear of the Lord and worship
 - Jesus has compassion for those in need

Apply: How should we respond?

- Fear: do you fear God in the biblical sense? (To fear God is to recognize His staggering power and be careful to live accordingly.) Where does it show up in your life?
- Worship: do you glorify God for the things He has done? For what He is doing? For what He will do?
- Report: do you tell others about what Jesus has done? If not, why not?
- Do you have compassion for the same people Jesus does?

For Further Study

- [Exodus 22:21-27](#) - The Law reveals God's heart for widows, orphans, and foreigners. See also [Deuteronomy 24:17-22](#).
- Using an online Bible or Bible app, do a search on "compassion." What patterns do you see?

Study Tool Spotlight

Our time together will focus on practice and offers just a few lessons along the way. If you are looking for something more structured that's still accessible to beginners, grab a copy of ***The New Joy of Discovery in Bible Study***. At just \$10, it will walk anyone through the practices of observing, interpreting, and applying Scripture. One theme of the book is the joy and excitement that comes from discovering the truths of Scripture for yourself.

Prayer

Some of us struggle with having compassion for others. Sometimes this is because we don't think about others enough to recognize their struggles and empathize with them. Sometimes the way we have been treated by others has hardened us; the well is dry or your expectations have been shifted. Pray for one another that God would help you to know the compassion Jesus has for us. Pray for opportunities to show compassion to others this week.

Next Steps

Our next passage is a familiar one: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). Taking what you have learned so far, see what you can find out and bring your insights to group next week. As always, you are encouraged to read the verses between here and there for context, practice, and spiritual growth.

Leader Notes

- Jesus theme: Christ has the power of life and death
- Value to practice: compassion
- Bible study skills: searching on words

Production Notes

Initial Observations

- Context: just healed the Centurion's servant
- She didn't ask for help
- He led with compassion
- God loves widows, watches over them
- Foretaste of the resurrection
- Fear turned to worship
- Reactions: prophet, presence of God