

Cancel the Funeral

Luke 7:11-17

The centurion's servant's life was hanging by a thread when Jesus healed him. When Jesus meets this young man's mother the thread his life was hanging by has broken. He's dead.

The Compassion of God

The crowd following Jesus meets the crowd coming to the funeral. The difference could not be greater. It's life, meeting death at the town gate. This dead man's mother was heartbroken, and she had every reason to be. She was alone in the world, facing an uncertain future. But Jesus has compassion on her – it's the gut-wrenching compassion of God for those whose lives have been ravaged by sin. And death is a result of sin.

But God shows that same compassion to all who turn to him: whether for the first time, or in repentance of sin. And Jesus has come, as God's compassion, to finally do away with sin and death.

Death is Conquered

Jesus touches the funeral bier they are carrying the dead man on. He is willing to become unclean for us. Then he tells the young man to get up, and he does! Jesus is more powerful than death, and gives the man back to his mother. God, in His compassion, is undoing the life-destroying effects of sin.

But there aren't always such happy endings in life. Sin and death still ravage individuals and families. So where is there hope for us? As Jesus steps forward, he is signaling that death, is living on borrowed time. Someone greater is here. And understanding that Jesus has triumphed over sin and death, in his death and resurrection, gives us the strength to face life and death.

God has visited his people

The people's first response is fear, but that soon gives way to praise as they realize what God has done for them in Jesus. The funeral procession becomes a praise party! They recognize Jesus is a great prophet like Elijah, who also raised a widow's son from the dead. But he is more than just a great prophet. They say that 'God has visited his people.' They could not know how right they were! God had sent his only son to die, that we might have life. His life for our life: the life of God's only son for the life of this woman's only son.

The picture of this funeral procession turning into a praise party is a wonderful picture of what Jesus has come to do! There is no longer any reason to stay in life's funeral cortege, and you can move from a sense of joyless formality to one of heart-felt praise as you begin to understand what it is Jesus has done for you.

In the words of Isaiah the prophet, Jesus has come "to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion – to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.' (Is 61)