

## **Fear Seized Them All**

### **Luke 7:11-17**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I have been asked a question about this text on a number of occasions, “What does it mean when it says that ‘fear seized them all?’ Why would they be afraid? What would cause fear?”

Consider the situation that day. Jesus, His disciples, and a great crowd are going with Him to a town called Nain, and as they draw near on the road at the entrance of town they basically run into a funeral procession heading out. You know how it is, traffic stops so that all the cars in the funeral procession can pass by.

This is a big funeral. People knew the woman who was the mother of this man. She has already laid her husband to rest at some point in the past, and she has been in the care of her only son. While this was a young man, one probably just out of his teens, they were a mutual support group. She was being cared for by him, as we might say today, as the bread-winner.

So, this crowd from town has gathered to show her their support, this is a trying time. Death is indeed a grim reaper, bringing pain and great hardship. Who would care for her now? What would be the means of her support?

Death is coming out of the city. The Lord of life is walking in. It is the Prince of Life who now confronts this victim of death, sorely weighed down by this blow.

Seeing her, Jesus has compassion on her. Yes, Jesus knows our earthly conditions. He has compassion for He knows full well the weight of grief that sinfulness brings. It is a weight that He bears fully in His own body, all the way to being nailed upon the cross. The wages of sin is death. Sin intrudes and brings grief, it messes up lives, it brings pain and suffering of both heart and mind, body and soul.

Here, wrapped in clothes and spices for burial was a widow’s son, lying upon some sort of board to carry him to the tomb in which he would be buried. Here are the consequences of sin laid for all to see. And everybody there knows this truth.

But Jesus tells her, “Do not weep!” I know your sorrow, I am going to do something different. My compassion for you is going to manifest itself by bringing life out of death.

Jesus touches the “casket,” as do many who come to pay their “last respects” to one who has died, and those carrying the young man pause to let him do so.

At this point, Jesus brings a whole new reality to this situation, “Young man I say to you arise!” Jesus brings a glimpse of the last day to all those gathered, although a bit foggy. On the last day all will rise in their bodies. On that day, they will be raised in perfected bodies that will never die again. On this day, a man returned to life and given back to his mother. Yes, life is victorious over death this day!

And that dear friends is why fear seized them all.

Imagine yourself at a visitation for a dear friend or loved one and someone walks up to the casket and says, “Young man I say to you arise!”

Dead men do not hear, so at the first utterance of sound from the lips of Almighty God, Jesus Christ on that day, the dead man must have been made alive in order that he might hear the command to arise.

How do you think people would respond to that should it happen today?

I would imagine that everybody, and I mean *EVERY---BODY* would be freaking out. Jaws would be dropped, eyes bugging out, and there would begin a murmur, “Holy buckets! What the heck just happened!” Would people not be afraid, wondering what had happened? I am guessing people would take a few steps back, some looking for the exits. Wouldn’t there be a bit of consternation about someone having that kind of power?

Remember Zacharias when he was in the temple and angel came to speak to him, to tell him that his wife – advanced in years – was going to give birth to a son? Remember the shepherds on the Judean hillside when the angel appeared to them to tell them of the birth of God’s Christ? There is fear in the heart of man when they find themselves in the presence of a higher being.

Jesus however was a normal looking man, nothing in his appearance stood out that made people think, “This is God!” So, this normal looking dude speaks to a dead man and he sits up in his casket and starts talking. What just happened? This is not normal. This is supernatural. God must be present, for this can only be done of God.

The boy was dead, for a couple days. It was plainly apparent. Dead men do not sit up and begin to talk. Now he is alive.

Who is this that is standing in our midst? A great prophet? God is definitely with us. We are not worthy though of the presence of God. We are sinners. We should prostrate ourselves in the presence of God.

So, as fear fell upon them, they also glorified God, rejoicing that God had visited His people. They were awakened from death, brought on by sin, and in that true fear of God follows. True fear of God acknowledges sin in repentance, and prays for God’s grace in forgiveness.

Dear friends, there many things we can take away from this text.

Did they hear and understand what Jesus has said? “I” say to you arise. He did not beg God to raise him as had all other prophets. Nor, did he speak as His apostles would after Him, asking that things be done “in the name of Jesus Christ.”

While it is obvious that those gathered that day may not have grasped the significance of Jesus’ form of address, you and I can see it clearly. He is proclaiming His divinity. He declares His power over sin and death.

As a dead man cannot raise himself from death back to physical life, so also men dead in trespasses and sin cannot raise himself to spiritual life. A man dead in trespasses and sin cannot rise above them of his own efforts, but must be raised by another.

Jesus speaks and it is accomplished. The Word of God raises from death and grants life. The dead man sat up and began to speak.

That Word raises true fear of God, producing contrition and repentance. Raised to life, true fear of God understands that we cannot continue in sinfulness.

True fear sees God's power and might and repents. I pray dear friends, that true fear of God seize you all. That you repent! That you turn from sin to the grace of God in Christ Jesus, rejoicing in His power over your sin and dath.

True fear leads to praise God for His compassion. For it is indeed God who visits His people and delivers them from sin and raises them to new life.

As we see the marvelous work of God to grant us life, we will, with all gladness, proclaim this good news to all those around us!

God has visited and redeemed His people. They did not recognize God in Jesus as the man in their midst, but He was there and gave life to them.

So today, we may not recognize God's Christ in the Word we hear. We may not comprehend that under the forms of bread and wine is the very flesh and blood of Christ for us to eat and drink, but there He is.

God has visited His people. He comes to raise us from death and grant us new life in Jesus Christ. And so He does, at His Word. In the name of Jesus. Amen.