

CHRIST INTERRUPTS A FUNERAL

One word from Jesus, and death lets go.

WHAT THEY HEARD

A widow is walking behind her only son's body, on the way out of town to bury him. Her husband is already dead. Now her son is dead. In that world she has no one left to provide for her and nothing ahead of her but poverty on top of grief. A crowd from the town walks with her, because everyone can see what has happened to this woman.

Coming the other way, up the road and through the same gate, is Jesus, with His disciples and a great crowd of His own. Two crowds meet at the gate of Nain. One of them is carrying a dead man out. The other one is following the Lord of life in.

Nobody asks Him for anything. That is the detail worth sitting with. He sees her, He has compassion on her, and He tells her not to weep before He has done a single thing that would give her a reason to stop. Then He touches the bier. Under the ceremonial law that touch should have made Him unclean. Instead it runs the other direction. Life comes off of Jesus onto the dead man. Death does not come off the dead man onto Jesus.

Then He speaks. No prayer, no ritual, no calling on a higher authority. "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sits up and starts talking, and Jesus gives him back to his mother. The crowd says two things. "A great prophet has arisen among us," which is true as far as it goes, and "God has visited his people," which is the whole truth. He did not send help. He came Himself.

A WORD FOR THE PARENTS

Your children need to hear something from you this week that the world will not tell them: death is not natural. We were not made for it. God created us to live, and in the Garden there was no such thing as a grave. Death came in as a punishment, exactly as God said it would, and it has been collecting ever since, from Adam and Eve all the way down to us, because we are sinners.

That is why grief is not a failure of faith. When you stand at a graveside and everything in you says *this is wrong*, you are right. It is wrong. It was never supposed to be this way.

And it is not going to stay this way. The same voice that stopped a funeral at Nain will speak on the last day, and the graves will empty. Not as ghosts. Not as spirits floating somewhere pleasant. Raised, in the body, to live with Christ in the new heaven and the new earth. That is what we confess every Sunday when we say "the resurrection of the body," and this week is the week to say it out loud in your house.

So bring Him your own losses, the ones you are carrying right now, untidied. The Jesus who could not walk past that funeral has not changed.

THE VERSE TO SAY THIS WEEK

"Young man, I say to you, arise." (Luke 7:14 ESV)

Say it in the car. Say it at bedtime. Say it until the youngest can finish it without you. Your older children are learning a second verse this morning: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23 ESV)

ONE QUESTION AT DINNER

Who can talk to a dead person and have them listen?

For older children: God said in the Garden that the punishment for sin would be death. So why is there a dead boy sitting up and talking in Luke 7?

FROM THE SMALL CATECHISM

The Third Article. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean? I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Your children saw a small picture of that this morning. One boy, one town, one afternoon. On the last day, Jesus will raise all of us.

PRAY THIS TOGETHER

Lord Jesus, You are God, and You are stronger than death. You saw the widow of Nain before she ever asked You for anything, and You gave her son back to her alive. Comfort us when we are sad, and keep us certain that You will call our own beloved dead out of their graves on the last day, and give us to live with You forever, body and soul. Amen.

THIS WEEK'S HYMN

LSB 578, "Thy Strong Word," stanza 6. We are singing this hymn every Sunday through October 11.

God the Father, light-creator, To Thee laud and honor be. To Thee, Light of Light begotten, Praise be sung eternally. Holy Spirit, light-revealer, Glory, glory be to Thee. Mortals, angels, now and ever Praise the holy Trinity!

The hymn spends five stanzas on a Word that does what it says instead of only describing things, which is exactly what happens at the gate of Nain. Jesus does not comfort the widow with an idea. He says "arise," and because of who is saying it, the boy is alive.

Then the last stanza tells you whose voice that was. "Light of Light begotten" is the Church's way of saying the Son is God Himself and not a messenger God sent. "Holy Spirit, light-revealer" is the One who will raise you on the last day. Your children heard both of those articles of the Creed this morning, and now they get to sing them.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

For a family that wants to dig further into what this text raises:

- Genesis 2:15-17, on the sentence God attached to the tree
- Romans 5:12, on how death came through to every one of us

- 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, on Christ as the firstfruits and death as the last enemy
- 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, on what kind of body is raised
- Job 19:25-27, on seeing God in your own flesh
- John 11:17-27, on Jesus at another grave
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, on grieving differently than those who have no hope
- Revelation 21:1-4, on the new heaven and the new earth, where death is gone

CREDITS

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