

CHRIST INTERRUPTS A FUNERAL

One word from Jesus, and death lets go.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Student handouts, one per child
- Pencils
- A whiteboard or a large sheet of paper
- Two lengths of yarn or ribbon, about three feet each, in two colors, for the two crowds
- The picture for this week, Schnorr's "Resurrection at Nain"

THE TEXT

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.

FOR THE TEACHER

Two crowds meet in the gate of a small town. One is carrying a dead man out. The other is following Jesus in. That picture is the lesson, and a first grader can hold it.

Your room asks two questions of every text this year: what does the text say, and what does this mean. Ask the second one out loud, over and over, exactly the way the Small Catechism asks it after every commandment and every article. It is not a trick and it is not filler. It is the habit you are building.

What it means here is a claim about who Jesus is. The crowd gets it half right. "A great prophet has arisen among us" is true, and prophets had raised the dead before, Elijah and Elisha both. But Luke does not let the half-truth stand alone. He puts the second sentence right beside it: "God has visited his people." Not sent. Visited. That is the sentence your room is after.

Say the hard thing plainly, because these children can take it and will hear it wrong if you leave it vague. People die because of sin. Not because that particular person was worse than anyone else, and never suggest so. Death entered the world when Adam and Eve sinned, and it comes for all of us. God did not make us for it.

LAW AND GOSPEL IN THIS TEXT

The Law. We were created by God to live forever. In the Garden of Eden, there was no death, but the devil came along and tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, and the punishment was severe: "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

The Gospel. From Adam and Eve, all the way to us, death claims us because we are sinners, but Jesus comes to free us from sin, death, and the devil. We see it beautifully when he stops this funeral: the boy in the coffin, with

his grieving mother, and with a simple word, Jesus undoes death. "Arise," he says, and the boy is alive again.

That's the same voice that will speak on the last day, when Jesus returns and says to us and to all his beloved dead, "Arise." The reign of death is ended, and we will live with Jesus in the new heaven and the new earth forever.

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

Walk them through it in order and let them supply the pieces.

A widow had one son and he died. She was walking out of town behind his body, and a crowd of neighbors walked with her. Jesus was walking into town, and a crowd walked with Him. The two crowds met at the gate. Jesus saw her. He had compassion on her. He said, "Do not weep." He touched the bier. He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." The boy sat up and started talking. Jesus gave him back to his mother. Everyone was afraid, and everyone praised God.

Ask: who asked Jesus to do this? Nobody. Let that answer sit for a second before you move on.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Ask it four times today, in these four places.

"He had compassion on her." What does this mean? It means Jesus felt her sadness before He fixed anything. He is not a machine that hands out miracles. He looked at a crying woman and He was sorry for her.

"He touched the bier." What does this mean? In the Old Testament, touching a dead body made a person unclean. So watch which way it goes here. Jesus does not get death on Him. The boy gets life from Jesus. That is what Jesus does with everything unclean He touches.

"Young man, I say to you, arise." What does this mean? It means Jesus does not ask anyone for help. He does not pray first. He just talks, and death obeys Him, because He is God and the same voice made the world.

"God has visited his people." What does this mean? It means God did not send somebody to help. God came Himself, and He is standing right there in the gate.

THE LESSON

1 • The Classroom Opening (8 min)

Invocation: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Sing stanza 6 of LSB 578, "Thy Strong Word," printed on the student handout.

Recite together the Third Article of the Creed, printed below in From the Small Catechism.

Then pray the Opening Prayer.

The Opening Prayer. O Lord Jesus Christ, who met a widow at the gate of Nain and would not walk past her grief, but touched the bier and called her only son out of death by Your word alone: bless our study of Your Word this day, that we who hear it may know You to be the Lord of life, and grant us to bring our own dead and our own dying to You without fear, waiting for the day You will speak that same word over all who sleep in You; who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

2 • Two crowds at the gate (10 min)

Lay the two lengths of yarn on the floor in a V, meeting at a point. That point is the gate. Put half the class on one line and half on the other. One side is carrying a dead man out of town. The other side is walking in with Jesus.

Walk them slowly toward each other until they meet. Stop them there and ask: what happens when these two crowds meet? Which one turns around?

The funeral turns around. Everybody who was walking out to a grave walks back into town instead, and the dead man walks with them.

3 · What does this mean? (15 min)

Work the four questions above, in order. Write each phrase on the board before you ask about it, so they can see the words they are being asked about.

4 · Read it for themselves (8 min)

Hand out the student handouts. Have them find and underline the words Jesus says. There are two things He says out loud: "Do not weep," and "Young man, I say to you, arise." Ask which one He says first, and why that order matters. He comforts her before He fixes it.

5 · Look at the picture (5 min)

Put the picture of Nain in front of them. Before you say anything, ask what they can find in it: the mother, the boy, the crowd carrying him, Jesus, His hand.

Then one question worth the whole five minutes. The artist had to choose one moment out of the whole story to draw. Which moment did he choose, and how can you tell? Is the boy still dead in this picture, or already alive?

There is no wrong answer. You are teaching them to look before they decide.

6 · Memory work (6 min)

Say it together three times, then split the room in half and have one side start it and the other side finish it.

7 · The Classroom Closing (8 min)

Ask who or what they would like to pray for, and pray for what they name. Then the Closing Prayer, then the Lord's Prayer together, then the Apostolic Benediction.

WHAT CHILDREN ASK

"Why didn't Jesus raise everybody who died that day?" He was showing what He is going to do for everyone, all at once, on the last day. This was one boy in one town so we would know what is coming.

"Does that mean I won't die?" You will die unless Jesus comes back first, and then He will raise you. Christians die and then get up. That is what makes a Christian funeral different from every other funeral.

"Where was the boy while he was dead?" The Bible does not say, and we should not guess. What it does say is that Jesus called and he came back.

"Is it wrong to be sad when someone dies?" No. Jesus was sad at a funeral too, and He cried at one, at His friend Lazarus's grave. Being sad is not a lack of faith. We are sad and we are certain at the same time.

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.

Notice the words "the resurrection of the body." We do not confess that we float away. We confess that we get up.

MEMORY WORK & HYMN

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

Hymn. LSB 578, "Thy Strong Word," stanza 6, the block hymn through October 11. Sung in the Classroom Opening and printed on the student handout.

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 whole hymn is about a Word that does what it says instead of only describing things, which is the point of the gate at Nain. Jesus does not comfort the widow with an idea. He says "arise," and the boy is alive.

This last stanza names who was speaking. Point at two lines. "Light of Light begotten" is Jesus, and it means He is God Himself, not a helper God sent. "Holy Spirit, light-revealer" is the One who makes us alive on the last day. That is the Second Article and the Third Article, in a song they can sing.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, You are God, and death does what You say. Thank You for having compassion on the widow, and for giving her son back to her alive. Be near to us when we are sad. Keep us in Your hand, and raise us up on the last day, with everyone we love who belongs to You. Amen.

Then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Then close with the Apostolic Benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen."

CREDITS

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These Sunday School Lessons are built especially for St. Paul Lutheran Church by Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller with Claude AI on the same Sunday Gospel Lesson.

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