Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus' Power over Death
Scripture: Luke 7:11-17
Code: 42-93

I can certainly tell you personally, and I'm sure others would say the same, that for a preacher, the favorite subject is the Lord Jesus Christ. The theme of the entire Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly and particularly the theme of the New Testament is the life and ministry of our Lord, and preaching on Him in specific is the highest privilege, the greatest joy for the preacher. That's what makes it so rewarding to be working our way through one of the gospels, the gospel of Luke. And when you come to a season such as the Christmas season and your thoughts are directed in a special way toward the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you're in a gospel you can almost just stay right where you are because every paragraph presents the glory of the incarnate God in Jesus Christ. And that is certainly the case for us, both this Lord's Day and the next. We'll just keep moving through Luke because what we're going to be learning here is so critical to this very Christmas season because the two passages before us proclaim Jesus as God come into the world.

Open your Bible then to Luke chapter 7, Luke chapter 7. And we come to a text of Scripture from verses 11 through 17. It's a wonderful story of Jesus raising a man from the dead, Jesus' power over death. Without question, I think, we would all agree Jesus Christ is the most well-known person in human history. The literate civilizations of the world all know something about the name Jesus Christ. The exceptions around the world would be those tribes and those isolated groups and families who are illiterate. It's rare to find someone who hasn't heard about Jesus Christ. I remember on one occasion trekking through a field in China, way out in the countryside and coming across some people living in a little ram-shackle place, Chinese people in an agricultural setting who had never head the name of Jesus Christ. That is rare in our media-dominated world today.

But as universal as the knowledge of the name of Jesus Christ might be, knowing who He is, is not so universal. There are diverse and divergent opinions concerning who Jesus Christ really is. It is not necessarily helpful, however, to list all the wrong ideas. We will not be assisted by going through a long list of the wrong views of Christ. I suppose there are so many we couldn't count them all. There are those sort of religious perspectives where a whole mass of people in some religious organization have the same view of Christ, such as the Muslims who think that He was simply a human prophet. Or the Mormons who believe that He is a created being, the spirit brother of Adam and Lucifer and on and on you could go. And then there are all of those myriad of opinions that everyone who seems to think that he can basically define truth for himself might hold toward Jesus. You ask 100 people, you might get fifty different views. But as I said, it's really not helpful to learn all the wrong things about

Jesus. What is necessary is to know the truth. And the truth simply put is that Jesus is God, fully man and fully God. And that is the core, the heart, the backbone, the foundation of the Christian faith.

That is also the testimony of Scripture. And before we look at Luke 7, I want to just read you a verse that I think most concisely states the reality of Jesus as God. It is John 1:18, I'll just read it to you. "No man has seen God at any time." That is a blanket statement. There are people who have had a view, a diminished view, a limited view of God. Moses, remember, saw the glory of God. Adam, you remember, even after the Fall, the presence of God was manifest to him in the Garden, probably in light, in a diminished form. There was the vision of God that Isaiah had. The vision of God that Ezekiel had. There were others; Abraham, who was confronted by God, appearing as a man in the book of Genesis. There have been times when God disclosed Himself in...in a diminished sense, in a limited sense. But no one has ever seen God fully, not even Moses who saw the glory of God. Moses, says Exodus 33 and 34, only saw God's afterglow, His back parts and he was veiled and tucked into a cave so that he was not exposed to the full blazing glory of God because God said, "No man can see Me and live."

So then, even though Moses was in one sense, Numbers 12:8, face to face with God, what he saw was a diminished reflection of God's real glory. No man has seen God at any time. But the only begotten, the *monogens*, the only begotten God, that is God the Son, the One who is in the bosom of the Father, the One who is intimate in the Trinity, He has declared Him. Nobody has seen God but the best view ever is the view of God brought to us by the *monogens*, the only begotten Son of God, the One who is literally intimate with God, in the bosom of God, that is the One who is of the same essence as God, He has declared Him or explained Him. The verb is the same verb from which we get the word "exegesis." Jesus exegetes God. Jesus explains God. Jesus unfolds God. Jesus reveals God. So when you look at Jesus, you're seeing God. That's why He Himself said, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father."

The greatest, clearest vision of God that man has ever, or will ever see, is in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has made God known, has exegeted God. He is, in fact, God in human flesh. And that is why in Luke, Luke calls Him the Son of the Most High God, calls Him the Son of God, calls Him the holy offspring and all of that way back in the first chapter of Luke. And as Luke unfolds the history of Jesus Christ, he continually demonstrates to us that there is no other explanation for Jesus Christ then that He is God. There is no other possible explanation.

We have seen that all the way through this incredible gospel. The original, angelic revelation that the child would be born indicated that He would be coming down from heaven, that He would be

Emmanuel, God with us. The angels proclaimed that to Joseph, to Mary, to Zacharias and Elizabeth, that their son would be the forerunner. They proclaimed it to the shepherds. The virgin conception of Mary indicated that this child was God. The virgin birth indicated that He was God. His parents affirmed it. Ananias...or Zacharias and Elizabeth affirmed it. So did Anna and Simeon. Even more importantly, God the Father affirmed it at His baptism and so did the Holy Spirit. And then when Jesus began His ministry, He showed power over Satan in triumphing over temptation. And then He showed power over demons in casting the demons out. And one of the demons in Luke 4:34 said, "I know who You are, the Holy One of God." And then in His power to heal the diseases, it was clear that He was God because every time He healed somebody He recreated them, recreated them physically, as well, in a sense, as reviving them, resuscitating them spiritually by casting demons out. His teaching also manifested His deity because He taught as no one had ever taught, with knowledge and wisdom that is without equal.

Luke then, finally, in building this case that Jesus is God, comes now to His power over life and death. And in a story that we'll see in verse 11 and following, Jesus' deity is evident because He raises a dead man from the dead. As the story unfolds, and I want you to begin to look at it in verse 11, we're going to see evidences that Jesus is God. We're going to see some implied evidences before we see an explicit demonstration of divine power.

Verse 11, "It came about soon afterwards," that is, soon after the healing recorded in the prior passage. You remember that He healed the slave of the centurion. We had a wonderful time studying that passage. "Soon after that..." That's an indefinite time designation. "Soon after that..." That would indicate a few days at the most. "He went to a city called Nain, and His disciples were going along with Him accompanied by a large multitude."

I read that and posed the question, why did He do that? Why did He decide to go to Nain? Nain is about twenty miles from Capernaum. It would be a full day's walk to walk twenty miles. It was south of Capernaum. It was about six miles southwest of Nazareth so that Capernaum, Nazareth and Nain, kind of in a triangle. It was three miles west of a town called Endor. You remember the witch of Endor. It was a small and very nondescript and insignificant town. By the way, it still exists today with the same name. Two hundred people live there. It was on the slope of some mountains called Little Hermon, near the valley of Jezreel on a hill called Moreh. The other side of that hill had a little town called Shunam where Elijah went to the Shunammite lady. So it was just a little town, nondescript, insignificant. And what's going on here is that Jesus determines to go to Nain and to drag this huge entourage with Him for this day's journey.

Now this introduces to us this idea, and this is the first point I want you to grab, of divine purpose. When you look at Jesus and you're looking to see God, you see it in this feature, this attribute: divine purpose. God never acts without a fixed goal and a fixed purpose. God never acts whimsically. There are no unexpected coincidences. There are no unplanned-for problems, contingencies. There are not plan Bs. Everything within the plan of God is fixed, settled, unchanging and brought to pass. He is sovereign. He has perfect intentions for everything He thinks, everything He says and every act. His mission is clear, His objective is clear, His strategy is clear, His plan, His purpose will come to pass. And the Old Testament makes this clear. This is how God acts. Jeremiah 29:11, God said, "I know the thoughts that I have toward you." In other words, there are no random thoughts in God's mind. Nothing pops into God's mind or nothing pops out. He doesn't have to remember anything, nor does He forget anything. Everything is purposeful, planned, fixed, unse...unchangeable and settled. He also says in Isaiah 55:11, "My word which goes forth from My mouth shall not return to Me void," or empty, without accomplishing what I desire, without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. Every thought is intentional. Every word is intentional. Every thought effects its end. Every word effects its goal.

Finally in Isaiah 46:9 to 11, "I am God. There is no one like Me, declaring from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, I will accomplish all My good pleasure. Truly I have spoken. Truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it. Surely I will do it.'" great truths. Every thought God has, every word God says, every act God does operates perfectly on divinely established purpose. And that is the way it is with Jesus. If you study the life of Jesus in the gospels, you will find a certain resolve in Jesus, such as in John 4:4 when He says, "I have to go through Samaria." Why do You have to go through Samaria? Because the plan is there's a well there and when we get to that well there will be a woman there at the very moment we get there, for an encounter that has been planned from eternity past by God. In the 9th chapter of Luke, and there are many illustrations of it, verse 51, "It came about when the days were approaching for His ascension, He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem." He knew exactly when He was going to die, when He was going to rise, when He was going to ascend to heaven. He knew exactly what the timetable was and what the steps were to bring that to pass. And so He resolutely sets His face to go to Jerusalem. This is evidence of His deity. He knows the future. He knows the divine purpose. He works on a timetable. A number of times He said, "My hour has not yet come." Remember that statement? John records it several time...times. It's not time for Me to do this, that time will come, and when the time comes He acts resolutely. In 13:33 of Luke, "Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem." He knew where He was to be when He died, and He knew how long it would take Him to get there. He knew the divine timetable. He knew the future and all the issues of the future and He moved on that plan. And here we see Jesus demonstrating the very nature of God. He knows where He's going. He knows what's going to happen when He gets there, even though the people that He

will meet don't know it.

It was a day's journey to Nain, twenty miles at least, maybe a little more and walking was the way you got there. They would have had to start early in the morning with this massive crowd to make that trip. Circumstances that were going to occur probably after they left would set up an incredible event. Jesus knew what perhaps hadn't even happened when He first began to head toward Nain, but He knew when He got there everything would be the way He wanted it.

Now back to verse 11. He wasn't alone. His disciples were going along with Him. And this group, again, includes His apostles. It includes anybody who was a student or a learner. Some of them later defected. John 6:66, "Some of His disciples walked no more with Him," when He said certain things that offended them. Disciples were students. This was His entourage. He was a walking school, is what He was. He was a...He was a teacher of teachers and mentor and He had this massive crowd of hundreds, if not thousands of people following Him everywhere He went. They were learning. They were at all levels of learning and commitment to Him.

In addition to the disciples, whom we've already seen and discussed back in chapter 6, the apostles we met in chapter 6, verse 13, the disciples we talked about when we were studying chapter 6, verse 20... But also we said, and we see it here again, there was a large multitude. These weren't committed students of His, this was just the thrill seekers, the curiosity seekers, the people who were following because they were so amazed by what He said, they were so amazed by what He did; power over demons, power over disease. And this crowd is accumulating. Go back to chapter 4, 5, 6 all the way through chapter 9, all the way down into chapter 14 and verse 25, He just keeps accumulating this crowd of people who are drawn by His miracles. They don't have any clue why He's going to Nain. He doesn't tell them. They don't have any sense of divine purpose. They're like us, they can't tell the future. They can barely interpret the present. They have a hard time interpreting even the past. But Jesus knows the past perfectly. He knows the present perfectly and knows the future perfectly. He knows exactly where He's going and why He's going there.

One of the current blasphemous ideas that's being circulated in evangelicalism is called "the openness of God" view. What it purports is that God has no idea about the future. Not only does He not plan it, He doesn't even know what it is. That is blasphemous. God knows the beginning and the end. Jesus Christ Himself as well, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. So here is Jesus with intentionality, moving in a direction toward an obscure little town that would never be known to us biblically if it weren't for this one incident. But He goes there because it is purposeful in the plan of God to have an encounter there with a funeral procession. That is God's plan. And the interesting reality would be that when Jesus left in the

morning, the man may not have been dead yet because the Jews never kept a body overnight, never. They didn't embalm. Decay sets in immediately. All they did was sprinkle the body, anoint the body externally; wrap the body in cloth. Once death occurred, they did that very rapidly, had a funeral very rapidly, and moved to bury the body. No one was kept overnight. It is very possible that Jesus started moving toward that funeral procession before there even was a dead person. But that was all in His own knowledge.

Secondly, divine purpose then melts into divine providence. God not only has a purpose, but God can orchestrate all of the contingencies to bring about that purpose. Jesus was going to Nain to raise a dead man, a dead man who when He started out may not have been dead. How was Jesus going to control all of the issues? The death of the man? The timing of the funeral? The service? The whole thing to have the encounter that He wanted to have at the moment that He wanted to have it? Right place, right moment? Well, that's divine providence. That's a great word. “Providence” refers to God's superintending control over all human actions and events to effect His predetermined purpose. That is, to me, one of the most amazing characteristics of God. I can understand a miracle better than I can understand that. A miracle is not complex. A miracle is when God steps in, interrupts the natural and injects a supernatural explosion of power. I understand that. The natural stops and God steps in supernaturally. Providence isn't that. Providence is God taking all the natural events and orchestrating them perfectly to effect His purpose. The complexity of that is staggering, absolutely staggering. But He knows all the details. He is into the details. Proverbs 16:9 says, "A man's heart plans his way, the Lord directs his steps." You can make all the plans you want; God sovereignly directs everything. Proverbs 16:33, "The lot is cast into the lap." You know, you may think you're just gambling, you're casting lots, throwing dice. But it's... Every decision is from the Lord. Read Psalm 139 verses 1 to 5. You'll see it there as well. Amos 3:6, "If there is a calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it?" Nothing happens in a calamitous level unless God has a purpose in it and providentially orchestrates it to effect that purpose.

So here. Purpose, we're going to Nain, melts into providence, perfect timing, perfect timing. Verse 12, "Now as He approached the gate of the city..." Small town like this wouldn't have a wall because there wouldn't be anything to protect, nobody is going to come in and siege Nain. It's just a small little town. But they had a gate because the gate symbolized that they had a city. And the gate was at the head of the main street and it was the place where they socialized and where the elders of the city sat and adjudicated on the issues and so it had a gate, sort of a symbolic gate, just sort of identifying the town. Sometimes when you're driving through a country, in a rural area, you'll come to a small town and they'll have some stone pillars on the side with the name of the town. That's not some wall of protection, that's just a point of identification. Something like that.

And so, perfect timing; He approaches the gate of the city. Nobody knows why He's going there, yet He does. It's all planned. "And behold a dead man was being carried out." Exact split second, providential timing; all the control factors belong to God. The man dies at the right moment. They get him ready for the funeral at the right moment. They have the funeral. They do the *shammah*, they go through the wailing, they go find at least two flute players, no self-respecting Jew would have a funeral without two flute players, even the poorest of the poor to play mournful notes on the flute and you had to have at least one guy banging a cymbal to put some dissonance into it to represent the discord and the dissonance of the pain of the loss. You should at least have one wailing woman. That was a profession in those days. You could be a professional wailing woman. There are women, if they had that today, who would qualify without question for that kind of career. They could make a real career out of that. And then what the wailing woman did, and the flute players did and the cymbal banger did was create dissonance and noise and move the crowd to wail and cry and the friends and the family, whoever was in the town, would all come out in this entourage.

Well it's a startling thing. "Behold," is the word in verse 12, "Whoa," from a human viewpoint, this is a surprising event. From the viewpoint of Jesus, this is exactly on schedule. From the human side, it's a startling coincidence. There is no such thing as a coincidence in God's perspective. The Lord is just gracefully, purposefully taking a step at a time, arriving at exactly the moment when that procession comes out of town. Biblical history is filled with that kind of scheduling.

By the way, in the 10th chapter of Luke there's an interesting little verse there. In the 10th chapter, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. And in verse 31, I was reading this and it struck me as interesting. Verse 31 says, "By chance a certain priest was going down that road." And I read that and I said, "Stop right there. Nothing in God's economy happens by chance." So I say, "I've got to go find that Greek word. What is that word?" Well it's *sugkuria*. It means "to happen." And the right translation is, "And it happened that a priest was going down that road," but that was not by chance. God is not caught up in serendipity. Things don't happen by chance. Well, that's just a footnote.

Back to chapter 7. With no...that's like saying, "Luckily, Jesus showed up." No. Luckily doesn't work. So we...we read here that He approaches and out comes this funeral procession and this is a shock. Out comes this wailing, noisy crowd and this dead man was being carried out, it says in verse 12. The funeral was over. People were carrying the corpse that had been sprinkled on the outside, dusted with some powder and some herbs and things like that and then wrapped and laid on a flat bier, b-i-e-r, stretcher. The word “coffin” appears here in the account in verse 14, but that would be very, very unusual for Jews to put a body in a coffin. They put them on a stretcher. And later on when the young man sits up, it's pretty evident that he wasn't in a coffin. So it was a stretcher. The body was laid upon

and having been wrapped and a cloth placed over the top of it. As I said, always buried immediately, never kept overnight. It's the end of the day now. It would take a full day to walk there with that large group and so it's getting to the end of the day which means the young man could have died early in the afternoon, or late in the morning after they had already started. So that Jesus goes there before the death has even occurred for this divine rendezvous.

Burial places are always outside of town. Poor people might... Perhaps like this widow, she may have been poor; we don't necessarily know that she was poor. The son may have provided well for her. But poor people were buried in a hole in the ground. The grave was dug, as is common today, and stones were placed on the top and stones were placed on the top to mark the grave for the purpose that people not go near it because if you went near the grave and touched it, you would become ritually defiled and you would have to go through this very complicated ritual prescribed in the 19th chapter of Numbers to ritually cleanse yourself. The Lord did that just as another way to remind people of how sinful they were. It was a symbol of sin and death, being a defiling reality. And so they would avoid graves. They wouldn't go near graves. One of the reasons they painted them white was so you would go around them. You didn't want to get yourself defiled. They would whitewash them, not so much to make them look beautiful, although I'm sure it made a contribution to that, but so the people could avoid them.

So it would be late in the day, they converge at the gate. The Jews have traveled along with Jesus all day long. They now confront the funeral. Now to make this even a more interesting scene, the dead man was the only son of his mother. The one thing a mother in Israel wanted was a son. You remember Hannah? How much did she want a son? And that was pretty typical. If you didn't have a son, it was the end of the family line and heritage and history was so important. And the fact that this is an only son makes this even more a scene of pathos, sad. By the way, in the 8th chapter of Luke, we're going to see Jesus raise someone from the dead. In this case it was the daughter of Jairus, and in verse 42 of chapter 8, he had an only daughter twelve years old. And in the 9th chapter of Luke and verse 38, I think it is, there was a man who came to Jesus and said, "I beg You to look at my son, for he's my only boy." An only son, an only daughter, and an only boy adds to the pathos of these scenes.

And so Jesus sees this dead man being carried out. In the funeral procession, the mother, by the way, the family goes first, and in this case the mother alone is going ahead of the casket. She's leading the procession to this graveyard. Rich people were buried in a cave, usually, and inside the cave they would have some ledges. There are a lot of caves, of course, in the land of Israel. They would even hole some out if they needed to and they'd have ledges and they'd put the body on the ledge and when the body deteriorated and only the bones were left, they would then have somebody

go in and scrape the bones into a stone box and set them down and they could put somebody else on the ledge until they deteriorated. They just stacked up the boxes inside there. That's the way the wealthier people were buried, the other ones, in the ground.

And so they were headed to wherever that cemetery was outside of town. Jesus looks again at this situation and recognizes that this is not just an only son, but this woman is a widow, verse 12. She is a widow. Now this is getting sadder by the moment. She's already lost her husband and, no doubt, she's going to go bury her son next to her husband. She is...Not only is the future of her family gone, but the present is in jeopardy now because she's lost her protector, and she's lost her support. This is sad. In fact, you know, in looking through the prophets, whenever the prophets talked about something that was ultimately sad, that the saddest of all things, when they wanted to use a metaphor for really sad situations, do you know what they used? They used the death of an only son. That was the greatest tragedy that could come into a family because it meant the end of the family. It meant the end of the future. Jeremiah 6:26, "Cry," Jeremiah says, "mourn as for an only son, a lamentation most bitter." When Jeremiah is telling the people of Israel to weep, he says, "I want you to weep seriously, the way you would weep for the loss of an only son." That's the most sorrowful experience in Jewish society. Amos, the prophet, when God was judging Israel in Amos 8:10, God says, "I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, a bitter day." And Zechariah chapter 12, when Zechariah looks into the future and sees Israel's salvation, he says this, "I will pour out on the house of Israel, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on Me whom they have pierced." Some day Israel is going to look on the Savior, aren't they? They're going to look on the crucified Christ, "And they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." The worst possible human loss was the loss of your firstborn son, there went the future. There went the family. That was the saddest.

And here is this dear widow walking in front of the funeral. She's lost her husband, now she's lost her only son. No security, no support, no future family. And she had sympathy. It tells us in verse 12 that a sizeable crowd from the city was with her, the flute players and the cymbal bangers and the wailing women and the friends and the rest of the townspeople, they were there to try to help. But this is the saddest of all sad, sad scenes in Jewish family life.

And then, divine purpose and divine providence blends into divine compassion. And you see something in Jesus that is true of God, verse 13, "When Jesus the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her." That's just amazing. The verb is *splagchnizomai*. It's a funny word. It has to do with feeling something in your gut, you know, you feel emotion and it churns your stomach. It makes your heart beat rapidly. It makes your heart stop sometimes, if you feel something strongly enough, some kind of fear. And that's how the Jews described affection, feeling, compassion. This is God. One thing is very clear is the distinction of the God of Israel, the true and living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob, the Creator, Redeemer God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true and living God, is a God of compassion, right? And that against the background of all other deities in the whole history of religion, none of which is compassionate, loving, gracious, forgiving, kind, merciful, tender-hearted. There are no Savior-gods in other religions. There are no gods of love, and tenderness and compassion. This isn't even a spiritual issue here. This isn't even about redemption. This is about just plain sympathy with human sadness. This is like Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus because it breaks His heart to see what death does to a family, two broken-hearted sisters weeping over their lost brother.

It is the nature of God to feel compassion. In Exodus, when God introduces Himself to Moses, He said, "I'll let My mercy and My compassion go before you." This is the distinctiveness of our God. He is a Savior and He is the only God who is a Savior. In fact, in Judges 10:16 it says, "God could bear no longer the misery of Israel." Isn't that amazing? Isn't it amazing that God actually felt the pain of Israel's misery? When His people are miserable, He is miserable. That's part of His loving-kindness. Psalm 103 verses 8 to 14, read it later, expresses that. Lamentations expresses that in that wonderful familiar passage, Lamentations 3:22, "The Lord's loving-kindness indeed never ceases, His compassions never fail, they are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness." God is compassionate all the time. He's the God of all comfort. And so when you meet Jesus you're going to see divine compassion, you're going to see the same compassion that is true of God in the Old Testament. It says in Matthew 9:36, "When Jesus saw the multitude, He felt compassion on them." In Mark 1:21 He met a leper and He was moved with compassion and He healed Him. In Mark 8:2 He said, "I feel compassion for the multitude." Why? "Because they've remained with me three days and have nothing to eat." It wasn't even a spiritual thing. He just felt pain inside because they were hungry. God cares.

And when we look at Jesus, we see the same thing. "He was in all points touched...tempted as we are. He is touched with the feelings of our infirmities. He is a sympathetic and merciful High Priest." He knows what we have suffered. And here you see God in human flesh with compassion. It breaks His heart to see a widow in sadness. It breaks His heart to see hope lost. It breaks His heart to see love devastated. He cares about the family. He cares about human suffering. That's why He's a Savior. He's a Savior in every sense. He even saves those who never believe in Him. He saves them in a temporal way. He fills their lives with joy. Why do you think the world is multi-colored? Why do you think food has so many varieties? Why do you think there's so many rich and wonderful and good things in life? Because God wants you to enjoy life; He cares about your happiness. He cares compassionately about your sorrow. Obviously, in the end He wants you to come to the knowledge of Him in salvation so that you can enjoy blessings forever. But in every manifestation of God in the Old Testament and the New, you see that He is tender-hearted toward people. “God so loved the world.”

Compassion then moves Him. And verse 14, it says, "He came up and touched the coffin," or the stretcher "and the bearers came to a halt." And here divine compassion we set aside, let's move to a fourth point. Let's call it divine purity, divine purity. It's just an implied thought here. He did something that in a sense He didn't want to do. He touched the dead. Back to Numbers 19 verses 11 to 22, I'm not going to read it. You read that and you read what you had to do if you did that. If you went inside the tent where there was a dead person, if you touched any of the accouterments, including the grave, where there was a dead person, you were ritually defiled. But Jesus just stepped up and touched it. Nothing defiled Him. He wasn't subject to any defilement, real or ritual. As the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 7:26 and following: "He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." You see, just an implied idea of His purity. He just went up and touched it. You know, stopping a funeral procession could be...could be a serious thing. Can you imagine walking up to a woman leading a funeral procession, weeping, and saying, "Stop crying." Well that is...that is either the act of a heartless person, that is a sick joke, or the act of a fool, or it is the words of someone who can change the reason for the sorrow.

You know, if there were...if they had some, you know, people who were kind of watching out for this lady and somebody came up and said, "Stop crying," they might grab him and say, "Get out of here, this is the time for weeping, this is what we...we hire people to do this. What are you doing?" And then stop this procession. I mean, that...in normal circumstances, whoever is in charge of security has got that guy out of there, quick. Jesus touched, obviously undefiled in every sense.

There's another element of the divine that I see here and that's...There was a divine authority about Him. It says, "The bearers came to a halt." They just stopped. What was it about His person that just stopped everything? You just didn't do this. This is just outrageous behavior, outrageous. Tell a woman not to cry, touch a casket, if you will, stop a procession, you just don't do that. But this is the holy offspring who is holy God. He could touch anything and be undefiled. Holy is His name, Luke 1:49 says. This again indicates that He is God. And He cares about...He carries about Him a holy bearing, a holy authority when He says, "Stop!" they stop. He didn't even say "Stop," He just put His hand on her and said, "Woman, stop crying," and He stopped the procession. They all did.

What was it about His presence, His bearing, His authority? Well those are all implied indications. Those are all attributes of God. God has authority. God is holy and undefiled. God is compassionate. God orchestrates providence. God determines His purposes. This is God. But that's implied. What is explicit is the last point, divine power, divine power. This is what you've been waiting for.

The middle of verse 14, "He said, 'Young man, I say to you, Arise.'" Now that... That also would be the words of a fool, or a sick joke if He was not God. He said...He didn't have to do anything, He just spoke. After all, Psalm 33:6 says, "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of His mouth all their hosts." Psalm 33:9, "He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast." He created the entire universe with His speech. And John 1:3 says that, "The Word was with God, the Word was God and all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." So here's the Creator and the Creator who created the entire universe with His word now opens His mouth and says, "Young man, I say to you arise." Creative power explodes out of the mouth of the Creator. Imagine, He says, "Young man," and He's addressing a dead person, "Young man." You know, He did the same thing with Jairus' daughter? He addressed Jairus' daughter, a dead girl. And He did the same thing with Lazarus in John 11. He spoke to Lazarus, a dead man who had been dead for four days, already stinking with decay. But He is God, He created the universe, He can create life in one who creates life in all. "Young man, I say to you, arise." Get up.

With that split second that He said that, life surged into the corpse in that split second, just like with the daughter of Jairus, just like with Lazarus, came right out of the grave. This is created power. This is God. In John 5, it's important that there is a recognition of John 5:25 to 29. Just listen to this. "Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming, an hour is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live." Hmm. "There's an hour coming in which," verse 28 says, "all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, those who did good deeds to a resurrection of life, and those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment, for as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself." So God the Father has the ability to give life. God the Son has been given the responsibility to give life. Someday in the final end of the age, He will give life to the whole world. Every person who has ever lived and died in this world, He will resurrect; some to the resurrection of life in heaven, some to the resurrection of damnation in hell. He will — has the power obviously to do that — raise every single person who has ever lived from the dead. This is a very simple task, this is just one. Then it will be millions upon billions. And He will do it the same way. "Arise," and out they will come, from the sea and from the land and the graves, the Scripture says, they will come. They will come to the resurrection of life into heavenly glory, or they will come to the Great White Throne and the resurrection of damnation to eternal hell. Jesus has been given the power to raise all the dead of all the ages which He will do in the future. Pretty simple task for Him to raise this one young man. He, by the way, has the keys of hell and death. Isn't that Revelation 1:18? He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and Last.

And by the way, would you notice here nobody asks Him to do this? Nobody asked for any of this. There wasn't any request. It wasn't like the centurion who sent somebody to ask Him to heal his slave. Furthermore, nobody seems to have any faith here. The centurion had faith. It wasn't the centurion's faith that caused Jesus to be able to heal his slave. Mark that: Will you? Very important

point: Faith never, never is to be considered necessary for divine power to work. This is the lie of many faith healers is that the reason people don't get healed is that they don't have enough faith. God is not impotent and your faith omnipotent. Jesus heals here. No request and no faith is noted. It is never faith itself that activates divine power. What activates divine power is God. He doesn't need your faith to do what He wants to do. Sometimes Jesus used faith, sometimes there was faith in His healings, but it wasn't necessary. Most of the healings, no faith is indicated. This is a sovereign act and it's not done just out of a desire to display power. It's really motivated by His compassion, isn't it? What a wonderful insight that is. How deeply He cares about people's suffering.

Oh, verse 15, "The dead man sat up." That will break up a funeral. Wow! And He did that at every funeral He attended. There are several funerals in the New Testament. Every one He went to He broke up by raising the dead. And His miracles are always instantaneous, complete and without rehabilitation, or process. There was no post-resurrection therapy. He didn't have to learn how to talk all over again. He sat up and began to speak. He was a mature man, fully alive, fully capable of mature speech and mature action. I mean, you can't imagine this massive crowd of people in this funeral and the guy just sits up and starts talking. It's like Peter when the Lord gave Peter the power to raise Tabitha in Acts 9:40. It says, "She sat up and opened her eyes." And then, end of verse 15, "Jesus gave him back to his mother." That was the point. You know, He could have said, "I want you now to travel with Me and give Your testimony. Want you to go on Christian TV." He doesn't say that. He says, "Look, your mother needs you." That's why He did it. There's no...I think after this, both the mother and the son probably wanted Jesus to stay around and they wanted to find out everything they could about Him and I'm sure He gave them the message of the good news of the gospel. But the initial deal here was that this was a brokenhearted mother and that made a brokenhearted Jesus. And He said, "You need your son back, here he is."

Can you imagine that reunion? Can you imagine? You can imagine a boy coming back from being gone and how a mother welcomes him back. But can you imagine coming back from the dead? What kind of celebration they had. Fire the wailing women. This is a party of all parties. Isn't it wonderful that the Creator God of the universe cared about a family, cared about a mom and a son? He knows. He is truly the God of all comfort.

Well that takes us to the response, and this is where we bring it to its end. Verse 16: "Fear gripped them all." Sure, holy terror, *phobos* from which we get phobia. Why were they afraid? Why did they have this holy terror, this trauma? Well, because they knew they were in the presence of God. They knew God was there, they knew this was the power of God. There was no other explanation. I mean, absolutely none. They knew this was the power of God. And, you know, whenever God makes appearances in Scripture, you have this kind of holy fear, whether it's Adam and Eve hiding in the

Garden, whether it's Moses fearing on the mount, getting the Law, whether it's Isaiah fearing that he's going to be destroyed because he's seen God, or Ezekiel going into a coma, or Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, or John in Revelation, or Manoah, the father of Samson who sees the Lord, or the disciples that see Jesus walk on water and still the storm, and they go into a holy terror and fear because they know that God is in their midst. Whenever there is the presence of God, it is a traumatizing experience. When God's power is on display, they know God is present. So they were terrified because God was there and they knew God was holy and they knew they were not. That's the sinner's trauma.

And so they did the right thing in verse 16, they began glorifying God. They said, "We've got to worship fast. We could get snuffed. This guy could be alive and we could all be dead. This...this...There could be a lot of funerals real quick here." They began to glorify God. That's another theme of Luke's gospel. We'll see it all the way through, the times that people glorify God. Also we'll see, as we've seen already in the past, the emphasis on fearing...fear gripping people in the presence of Jesus. And here was their conclusion. Go to the end of verse 16, "God has visited His people." God has tented, tabernacle, God's here. That's a familiar Old Testament expression, God has visited His people. It...it...It literally means "God has arrived here, God has come here to help us, God has come to show His care for us." I think I would translate it, "God has come to help His people." God's here. We find it in Ruth 1:6, Exodus 4:31, Psalm 106, verse 4, it was a familiar thing. And the people prayed for that, "God, visit Your people, God, visit Your people, God, come down and help us, come down and show Your concern for us." They've been praying that for a long time. There hadn't been a prophet for over 400 years. There weren't any angelic visitors. There hadn't been any divine intervention. There hadn't been any miracles. There hadn't been any words from heaven. God had been silent for centuries. And there was this longing for God to visit His people. You remember Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, recognized that when the Messiah comes, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us." And then he says in verse 78 of that Luke 1, "The Sunrise from on high shall visit us," meaning the Messiah. So they wanted God to visit them. They were eager for God to come down into their world and fix their world. And we understand that even today, don't we? We would love to see God come down and bring righteousness, establish His kingdom, help His people.

Well, they knew God was in their midst. They were terrified at His presence, and it catapulted them into glorifying God and praising and worshiping God to try to mitigate God's anger with their sin. And they realized that God had visited them because there was no explanation for the dead coming to life, except the Creator. Nobody can do that. And verse 17, "And this report," what report? The report that God was visiting them, and that a man had been raised from the dead through the power of Jesus, "This report concerning Jesus went out all over Judea." That would include Galilee, that's the full

country of Israel, including Galilee, "and in all the surrounding district." That would mean around the city of Nain and that region. So you have the far word going to the ends of the land of Israel, all Judea, the near word spreading around the area of Nain. The message went everywhere. God is visiting His people. And we know it's God because the dead live. You can add that to the blind seeing, the lame walking, the deaf hearing, the demons being cast out. God is visiting His people.

But it's a sad reality how fickle and fleeting that attitude was and how they underestimated it. They were right, God was visiting, but they didn't really understand that God Himself was actually there in Christ. In Luke 19, sad, Jesus, verse 41, saw Jerusalem and He wept. He cried. He was crying because a funeral was coming. And He says, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things that make for your peace, if you would just have known, if you had only understood what was going on and how I would have brought you peace, but now it's hidden from your eyes and the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you and they will surround you and hem you in on every side and will level you to the ground and your children within you and will not leave in you one stone upon another. That's the destruction of Jerusalem in the Roman attack in 70 A.D. He says you're going to be judged and the reason, the end of verse 44, "Because you didn't recognize the time of your (what?) visitation." You kept saying, "God has visited us. God has visited us," but you didn't really understand it. And then the consequence of that rejection, they didn't understand their true visitation. The consequence is given in Acts 15:14, it says, "God visited the Gentiles to take out a people for His name."

When Israel didn't know He had visited, when they didn't respond to the visit, God turned from Israel to the Gentiles and visited them and took out people for His name, the church. You know, you would have thought, "There is no way they can miss the visitation of God in Christ, His annunciation, His conception, His virgin birth, His...the testimony of angels, of Zacharias, Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary, Anna, Simeon, His genealogy, His baptism, the affirmation of the Father, the Holy Spirit, His triumph over Satan and temptation, His teaching, His miracles, His power over demons, disease and death, the evidence is overwhelming about who Jesus is and here they are glorifying God in holy fear and here they are saying, 'God has visited us.' What is wrong with this thing? What was the fatal flaw here?"

Look at it again. Chapter 7, let's go back to the middle of verse 16 and the statement we skipped. Here's what they said, "A great prophet has arisen in us," *en* in the Greek. A great prophet has arisen in us? Was Jesus a great prophet? Yes, the greatest prophet that ever lived. Is that true? Yes, but is that not understating the reality? That's what the Moslems say. That's what the Mormons say. That's what the Jehovah's Witnesses say. That's what almost everybody would say. "Hey, he was a great preacher." A great preacher, not the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15 to 18, prophesied by Moses to be

the Messiah. He was “a prophet who rose up from within us.” No. He is the Son of God who came down from above us. It's that underestimating that is so deadly. They knew God visited, but they didn't understand that Jesus was God and so they missed the time of their visitation and were judged by God. Sad, a great prophet; it's an incomplete confession.

You say, "Why did they conclude that?" Well, I'll tell you why they concluded it. They knew of two Old Testament prophets, one named Elijah, and one named Elisha, remember? Both of those prophets who were believed to be among the greatest of prophets, both of them raised people from the dead, right? Elijah, 1 Kings 17, Elijah was used by God to raise the widow's son from the dead. Remember he was lying on his body and he went through all kinds of things, praying and asking God and 1 Kings 17:22 says that God did it. Elijah couldn't do it. He tried, you remember, he breathed and he gave him, you know, CPR, trying to bring this kid back. Finally God answered his prayer. First Kings 17 tells that wonderful story. Then came Elisha after Elijah and in 2 Kings 4 he had a similar experience in which God used him to raise someone from the dead. But you remember, he couldn't do it either and he kept going back. You remember the story, back and forth and back and forth and, you know, he's going through what is assumed to be prayers and asking God, "Please do this, and please do this," and he was eventually allowed to see God raise the dead.

So when they thought about who raised the dead, it was Elijah and it was Elisha and they were prophets and so in their short-sightedness they said, "Oh, this is one like Elijah. This is one like Elisha. This is a prophet. We have had prophets with that kind of power."

Well let me tell you something. If they knew the story they would know Elijah didn't raise the dead, God did in answer to his prayer. And Elisha didn't raise the dead. God did in answer to his prayer. But here Jesus raised the dead. No one to pray for in this sense.

Notice the right conclusion about Jesus. They say He's a prophet? Well the whole civilization of Jews at that time was basically judged by God in destruction for coming to that limited under-estimation. In Matthew 16 Jesus said to the disciples, one day, "Who do men say that I am? And the disciples said, 'Well some say You're Elijah, some say You're Jeremiah, and a lot of people say You're one of the prophets.' And He said, 'But who do you say I am?' And Peter said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," right? That's the right conclusion.

Let me close with this. Turn to John 11. This is the resurrection of Lazarus. I want to show you the difference. In John 11 Jesus came to Bethany where the family of Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived, two miles east of Jerusalem, been there many times. And verse 23, Lazarus is dead. He's been dead

for days. "Jesus says, 'Your brother will rise again, don't worry.' She said, "I know. I know he'll rise again in the resurrection on the last day. My eschatology is...I understand that. I'm a pre-millennialist. I know all about that. I know someday in the future he's...' Jesus said, 'Wait a minute, I am the resurrection and the life, who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?'"

Now get this. Now He hasn't even raised him from the dead yet and she said to Him, "Yes, Lord," and listen to her confession, verse 27, "I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, He who comes into the world." That's the right confession, isn't it? That's what she believed and that's the truth. To say a prophet has risen within us is wrong. To say Christ the Son of God has come into the world is right. He is God. That is the gospel, eternal life and resurrection for those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the One who came from heaven to earth to die for our sins and rise again for our justification. That's the only acceptable view of Jesus and there is salvation in no other name.

Lord, thank You again for this incredible drama in which Jesus again manifests His deity. Thank You for our Savior. We love Him, we long to honor and serve Him. And may every heart here be drawn to Him who is the Christ, the Savior, the Son of God who came into the world to give His life for sinners. In His name we pray. Amen.

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