Luke Lesson 25 (2019)

**“YOUNG MAN, I SAY TO YOU, GET UP!”**

Luke 7:11-17

Key verse: 7:14

“Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’”

In the previous passage, 7:1-10, we saw how Jesus was amazed at the faith of the Roman officer, who had genuine love for humanity, the spirit of humility and absolute trust in the authority of Jesus’ words. The centurion said to Jesus, “But say the word, and my servant will be healed.” (7:7) Turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” (7:9)

In today’s passage, we see Jesus’ raising of a young man from death. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_4LpZgm2nw>) During his messianic ministry, Jesus had raised many people from death. This young man was the first one whom he raised from the dead. In fact, this event is recorded only in Luke’s gospel. It seems that the author Luke included this event because it reveals Jesus’ great compassion and power as the Messiah – the Son of the living God. Let’s see how this event reveals who Jesus really is.

**First, Jesus is all knowing (11)**. Look at verse 11. “Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him.” The phrase “Soon afterward” refers to the healing of the centurion’s servant recorded in the previous passage (7:1-10). Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called “Nain”, along with his disciples and a large crowd of people. The village of Nain was a very small town, located about 25 miles southwest of Capernaum. (Map#1) Traveling from Capernaum to Nain took almost a whole day.

Why would Jesus suddenly decide to go to this small village instead of continuing his ministry in the big town, Capernaum, unless he had a clear purpose? I am sure that his disciples and the large crowd who followed him had no clue as to why Jesus was heading to Nain. Jesus, however, knew exactly what happened and what he would do there. This reveals Jesus’ divine knowledge of things even before they happen. As a matter of fact, Jesus is God the Son, who is all knowing and all powerful.

This reminds us of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman in John’s Gospel Chapter 4. When Jesus learned that the Pharisees in Judea was antagonized by his popularity among the people, he decided to leave Judea and go back to Galilee. In those days, most Jews would not normally travel through Samaria even though it was a short cut, because of their racial prejudice against Samaritans. However, Jesus decided to go through Samaria. Why would he insist in taking a troublesome and hostile route? It’s because Jesus had in mind to meet and save a lonely and thirsty Samaritan in a town called Sychar. In fact, when he arrived at the town of Sychar, he sat down by the well and waited for the woman to come out there, while his disciples had gone into the town to buy food (4:1-7). The woman had no idea that she would meet the Messiah by the well. But Jesus knew her and everything about her even before she met him for the first time.

We didn’t know God. But God knew us even before we were conceived. This reminds us of what God spoke to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." (Jer. 1:5) Our life is not an accident but the will of God. God has a good purpose for us. That’s why we are here. We must find out what God’s will for us is.

We also plan things according to our best knowledge and understanding. Yet, we are often frustrated when things do not go as we planned. What should we do? We need to trust in God’s sovereignty over all things, which flows directly from his omniscience and omnipotence. Proverbs 3:5-6 states, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” (NIV) Psalm 46:10 states, “He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God.” Our Lord Jesus is the divine Son of God who knows all things even before they happen. We need to trust in him more and more in every step of our lives. In the following verses, we learn Jesus continue to reveal himself as the Son of the living God.

**Second, Jesus had compassion for a single mother.** Look at verse 12. “As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out – the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her.” As Jesus was approaching the town gate, his reason for coming to the village of Nain became materialized. How? A dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Although his disciples and others who followed him were surprised, Jesus wasn’t because he knew it beforehand. However, it was a very sad and gloomy funeral process particularly because the person who died was very young, perhaps in his 20’s or 30’s. We are not told the cause of his death. It’s so unfortunate that this man’s life was cut short by his premature death.

We notice that the author Luke highlights the dire situation of this young man’s mother by stating that he was the only child and she also had lost her husband and became a widow sometime in the past. In those days, there was no social security or welfare benefit for widows or orphans. This reminds me of my aunt. She escaped from North Korea to South before the Korean war. Then she lost her loved ones one after another. Her only son was a soldier in South Korea and died during the Korean war in 1951. That was devastating enough. Then, some years later her husband died of carbon-monoxide poisoning and her lovely daughter due to an illness a couple of years later. She was left alone, poor, and lonely. She had to support herself and her two growing daughters. I often heard her saying to my mother in tears, *“I should have died early.”*

Death is very tragic. But for some people, their life is full of tragedy. After the death of her husband, her son had to take care of his mother. But now she was left alone. By this time, she could have been in her middle age or even older. Who is going to support her economically, socially and emotionally? Her life at best was nothing but a tragedy because death took away all her hopes and dreams. If death is the end of life, we are just waiting in an endless line of funerals; first for our loved ones and then for ourselves. In fact, the sad situation of the widow represents the tragic condition of all humankind; people are born, get sick, die and return to the dust of the earth. This is true. We all die someday.

What did Jesus do for the widow? Look at verse 13. “When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’” Jesus was deeply moved by her dire situation. His heart went out to her, meaning that he felt compassion for her. Jesus sympathized with her deep sorrow. It’s possible that Jesus also cried along with her and others. The phrase “His heart went out to her” can also mean that Jesus validated her grief, her sad emotions and the sense of loss. It’s proven to be healthy that we can cry and mourn for our loss and sadness for a certain period. Jesus, who is fully human, is also an emotional being who can understand us and validate the emotion of our sorrows. Hebrews 4:15 states, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses …” Hebrews 2:17 states, “For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” However, this merciful Jesus had a special plan for the widow. So, he said to her, “Don’t cry!”

**Third, Jesus raised the dead young man and gave him back to his mother.** Look at verses 14 and 15. “Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, ‘ Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.” I am not familiar with the Jewish tradition of a funeral. It was possible that touching the coffin of a dead person was considered ceremonially unclean (Nu. 19:11-22). But Jesus touched it anyway. When he did it, the bearers stood still, probably thinking that Jesus wanted to say his final words to the dead. Jesus could have said, “Young man, I cry for you. You also left your mom alone. Don’t worry, I will find a way to help her. Rest in peace.” That would have been comforting to everyone, including the widow.

But what did Jesus say to the dead? He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” Many centuries earlier, the prophets Elijah and Elisha also raised the dead people by praying to God and crying out for them (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-36). But Jesus didn’t even pray for this dead man. He simply said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” Who could say what Jesus said to the dead man? Only the Creator God who demonstrated His power by calling the entire universe into existence.

What happened to the young man? By Jesus’ words of command, the dead man came back to life. He sat up on the bier as if he just woke up and began to talk. We are not sure what he had talked about. He could have said, *“Why am I here in the coffin?”* Then one of the poll bearers could’ve said, *“You were dead, young man. We were about to bury you.”* Then he said, *“Interesting! In my dream, I met an angel who stood beside the beautiful gate to heaven. I asked him if I could enter the gate. He said ‘no’ and told me that my time has not yet come. And I should take care of my mother first. Wow! Now, I realize that I was dead, but I am alive now. Praise the Lord!”* And Jesus gave him back to his mother.

This story has a happy ending. This event, however, does not apply to every person who died. It’s true that during his life and ministry in this world, Jesus raised many dead people. But he didn’t always raise dead people. He passed by the numerous tombs in the cemetery. And no one even dared to ask Jesus to raise the dead young man. Nevertheless, Jesus chose to raise this young man to reveal his glory as the compassionate and almighty Son of the living of God. Jesus gave him back to his mother.

Where do we find such a compassionate and mighty God as our Lord Jesus Christ? He is full of compassion for us and is almighty. He is Immanuel, God with us. He is not far away from us. He is with us always. And he promised to give everlasting life for those who believe in him and said in John 5:28-29, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned.”

In fact, Jesus said to Martha, the sister of Lazarus, in John 11:25 and 26, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” Jesus’ words of promise show that when we believe in Jesus, everlasting life starts here and now in this life and lasts forever and ever. Therefore, we don’t need to be afraid of death or dying. In fact, we have the hope of the glorious resurrection body in Christ Jesus, the Son of the living God. Jesus is the best gift from heaven for all humankind.

We want to stay young and healthy forever. But we cannot remain young physically. We will get old and die someday without exception. Physical death is the prerequisite for the glorious resurrection body. 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 states “For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

Look at verses 16 and 17. “They were all filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God has come to help his people.’ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.” Surely, the raising of this young man surprised all people, including his disciples and others. They praised God and said, “A great prophet has appeared among us. God has come to help his people.” A sensational response came from all those who witnessed this miracle. That was probably one of the best responses. Yet, most of them, including his own disciples, had not been able to understand who Jesus really was. Why not?

It’s because surprisingly enough, no one can come to know Jesus as the Son of the living God unless they are chosen by God. It’s God’s one-sided grace and gift that we accept Jesus as our Savior and Lord. It’s only through God’s mercy we are saved. Romans 8:29 and 30 states, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” These verses show that we are in good hands of God our Father who is full of compassion and is almighty. We are to trust in him.

We don’t fully understand God’s mysterious sovereignty in saving fallen humankind. But we know for sure that God, who is all-powerful and knows all things, had chosen you and I, is something we should be forever grateful for. And we must hold tight to his grace of salvation in our hearts. Some of us might, who are in sorrow, may want to cry. It’s okay to cry. But we also need to hear Jesus’ words, “Don’t cry!” Others who are troubled in life may be frustrated and discouraged. They need to hear Jesus’ words “Young man, I say to you, get up!” Jesus our Lord is not far away from us. He is with us. He knows us and everything about us. Yet, we need to trust him more. May we exercise our faith in the Son of the living God day by day.