

There is an altogether nasty truth about us as sinful human beings. At times, the more we hear or are exposed to something the more we can begin to take it for granted, become disinterested in it, or even begin to dislike it. For example, we enjoy a new song until we hear it all the time. Then we can't stand it. The same can happen with food. On a far greater and much sadder scale, people talk about this happening within marriages. So what about Jesus' miracles? Have they fallen prey to this awful tendency we sinful humans have? Having heard and read about them often, have they lost their splendor; their magnificence; their significance?

It is a miracle that stands before us today. We read it from Luke 7:11-15: *Soon afterward Jesus went on his way to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd were traveling with him. ¹²As he was approaching the town gate, there was a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother. She was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not cry." ¹⁴He went up to the open coffin, touched it, and the pallbearers stopped. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.*

As we study these words throughout the week, I plead with you to fight against any thought that might have you thinking, "I've heard this before. I know Jesus' miracles reveal him as true God and the promised Savior. I know that they show his power. Why do I need to hear this again?"

Each miracle carries a specific lesson for us. In addition to proclaiming the truth about Jesus – who he is and the truth about his power – the one before us also shows his love and compassion. For this reason, we allow ourselves to be captivated by these words as we consider what happens when Death Meets Life.

1. Talk about/consider some things that you don't like as much today because you have been exposed to it so often. Then reflect on/discuss the question, "Have we fallen prey to this awful tendency when it comes to Jesus' miracles?"

2. What is the answer to the question, "Why do we need to hear this again"? *(answer on the basis of what is provided in the devotion AND add your answers to it)*

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for your gift of salvation through Jesus. Amen.

The scene of our lesson is dramatic. Two processions are making their way towards each other. One is coming out of the city of Nain. We might call this procession death. For at its front is a stretcher upon which a man lies dead, followed by a crowd of fellow townspeople. The other procession is making its way into the city. We might call this procession Life. For at its front is Jesus, followed not only by his disciples but also by a crowd of people. And as death meets Life, two enemies meet.

You see, life is the opposite of death. Death was never supposed to be a part of life. Death is something totally unnatural; a violent intrusion into God's good work of creation. Let's talk about that for a moment.

When God created Adam and Eve, he created them to live forever. When we read in the book of Genesis that **“the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being”** (Genesis 2:7), they were in the fullest sense of the term alive. They were bound to God by the most intimate bond of love and trust. In the language of the Bible that’s being alive.

So what happened? They refused to obey God. By that act they separated themselves from God, and in the strong language of the Bible that's being dead. And as evidence that they had cut themselves off from their loving Creator, they would also be subject to physical death – the separation of soul and body.

1. Why are life and death enemies?
2. What is life in the fullest sense of the term?
3. What is death in the fullest sense of the term?
4. What happens at physical death?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, we praise you for your help and salvation. Amen.

Think about your death. I know, it's not something we often want to do. Instead, we try to shield ourselves from death. In fact, much of what we do revolves around trying to avoid death. We may exercise, watch what we eat, deny that we are aging all in an effort to fight back every thought about the sands of time slowly slipping away in our lives. We try hard to keep death at arm's length by using words like "passing away" or "taking your last breath" to make it sound less violent, less fearful. But the reality of life includes the inevitability of death.

That means there could be no more fitting or timely words for us. Nothing could be more practical. For we are part of the procession that was going out of Nain that day that Jesus arrived. Hebrews 9:27 reminds us, **"Man is destined to die once."** And why? In the book of Romans we have our answer: **"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).** That means you, and it means me. We can't escape it. You can't side-step it. We can't just chalk it up to "it's the way of life, everyone has to go through it." No, it's much more powerful than that. It's much more meaningful than that. Your aging, dying body is a commentary on you. It is a commentary that you and I are sinners, and that our sin separates us from God.

This should cause us to pause and consider the rapid flight of our own days. It should lead us to humble ourselves before God. It needs to awaken us to the fact that the goal of achieving a pleasant existence in life is not where all our efforts should be channeled. Instead, being on a constant crash course with death because we have rebelled against God, means we need to know how to keep the enemy of death from winning.

1. Agree or disagree: Great saints do not like to die. The fear of death is natural, for death is a penalty; therefore it is something sad."

2. Consider the first paragraph again. Why, after that paragraph, would the devotion state: "That means there could be no more fitting or timely words for us. Nothing could be more practical"?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, make me eager to find you where you are – in your Word. Comfort me in sorrow, and remain with me in joy. Amen.

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Thankfully we have God's Word before us today, because as we see Life and death collide, there is no doubt as to which one is in control. **"When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not cry.' He went up to the open coffin, touched it, and the pallbearers stopped. He said, 'Young man, I say to you, get up!' The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother."**

Jesus is in charge here, not death! There are so many things in life that remind us that we are not in control. Perhaps the greatest evidence of this is death. But while we aren't in control, neither is death. Jesus is.

1. Why should death, and especially its cause, awaken us to the fact that the goal of achieving a pleasant existence in life is not where all our efforts should be channeled?
2. Why was the woman's dead son able to hear Jesus?
3. Besides death, what are some things that remind us that we are not in control?
 - Take a moment to come up with three promises of God or sections of the Bible that remind us that God is in control not only at death but at all times.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are Lord of life and death. You control all things, including my life and all that fills it. Give me a heart that submits to your will and trusts your gracious promises. Amen.

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That's why he can say, don't cry. At first glance such a command, no matter how sympathetically spoken, seems almost ridiculous. If anyone had reason to cry, it was this woman. First her husband had died; now her son. Why shouldn't she cry? Hadn't everything that mattered to her been taken away from her?

But Jesus' words are not empty words spoken in a vain attempt to make her feel better. He didn't say, "Oh, it will be okay. You'll be alright. I'm sorry for your loss." He gave a command that carried a promise that he would do something about the cause of her grief.

That's the very thing he has done for us! Sin and death have caused countless sorrows and pains for everyone since the fall into sin. But there is comfort for these sorrows. That comfort is Jesus. As we consider this miracle, one of the most amazing things about it is how Jesus' compassion drove him to action. He didn't simply speak words of comfort in order to show his compassion – he acted on behalf of this woman. The same is true for us. God's compassion drove him to action on our behalf.

Imagine this: You're lying on your stomach in a rubber life raft. The wind is whipping freezing spray into your face. The thin layer of your survival suit is barely keeping you from becoming numb. The crab boat that had been your livelihood is already on the bottom of the ocean. What thoughts go through your head? Family and friends; wife and children; lost or missed opportunities?

Then you see it between the towering swells – the spotlight from a Coast Guard helicopter. A thin lifeline and basket dangle empty, waiting to be filled with you and your crew. Help has arrived! A rescue swimmer jumps in to save you.

1. We often times are at a loss of what to say to someone who has lost a loved one. When that loved one is a believer, what does this devotion remind us we can say?

2. Jesus, who is true God, acted on behalf of this woman. God's compassion drove him to action on our behalf. How?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, wipe the tears from my eyes. Strengthen my faith in Jesus. Amen.

Jesus, like the rescue swimmer, jumped in to save us who were lost. He became a real human being in order to experience life and death. In Jesus, God himself came to help his people. Jesus came to restore what was lost. He came to make things right. He came to do the impossible, to do something no one else could. He came to undo sin and death by paying for our sin and dying our death as sin's wages. And not only did Jesus take away the cause of death he also conquered death by walking away from the tomb where he had been buried. Jesus gives us reason not to cry.

Put yourself in that crowd of people that day who saw what happened. Have you ever felt similar gut-wrenching sadness? If you have ever walked behind a casket as it was carried from the hearse to the grave, then you know. If you have ever been to the doctor and they said, "This isn't good news," then you know. If you have ever been tormented by past sins and their earthly consequences, then you know. If you have ever had to live with chronic and constant pain, then you know. If you have ever had to deal with mental illness, then you know.

But now consider what you witness.

1. The devotion states that Jesus did the impossible. What was the impossible, and why could no one else do it?

2. Take a moment and consider/discuss what your greatest gut-wrenching sadness has been.

3. What reasons has Jesus given us not to cry?
 - Do Christians who grieve openly because of death show a weakness of faith?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help us to trust in you and your power, especially when earthly fear and sorrow overwhelm us. Amen.

Put yourself into the crowd that day when death met Life. Consider what you witness. You witness two enemies meet. On one side is death, the by-product of sin – just like all the problems we mentioned yesterday. And as you watch the procession of death make its way out of the city, it looks like it will have the final say – that it will win.

But on this day, you see who really is in charge – Life. Now ask yourself: On the basis of what you see; on the basis of what you hear; on the basis of what Jesus does is there anything in your life that Jesus' can't overcome? Is there any illness, any problem, any hardship, any failure, or any weakness that he isn't powerful enough to handle? Any sin that he can't forgive?

His heart is moved to make your pain his own, your hurts his own. In fact, with the greatest compassion for you he even made your sins his own, putting them away forever at the cross. The sympathetic Savior always gives help when we need it most. Is there any reason why the one who holds on to Christ by faith would ever need to fear death? When death meets Life, Life conquers death.

The contrasts between the two processions in our lesson today could not be more dramatic. Death and sorrow were going out of Nain. Life and hope were going in. The wages of sin was coming out. The sacrifice for sin was going in. Jesus faced down death with compassion for those affected by it. He undid death's damage by his undisputable power. Remember this account when death comes knocking on your door or makes an entrance into your family. Remember this day when troubles arise and hardships come. Life conquered death, and that victory is now yours through faith in Jesus. Amen.

1. The devotion states that Jesus makes your pain and hurts his own. What is the proof that he will and does do this?
2. Throughout this devotion, Life has been capitalized. Who is it referring to?
3. What happens when death meets Life? What does that mean for the believer?

Prayer: Compassionate Savior, thank you for a heart that reaches out to me in every need of body and soul. In my darkest hours, heal me with your loving-kindness. Amen.

ANSWER PAGES

PAGE 1

1. Talk about/consider some things that you don't like as much today because you have been exposed to it so often. Then reflect on/discuss the question, "Have we fallen prey to this awful tendency when it comes to Jesus' miracles"? The first part of this question is just an "ice-breaker" to get you started talking, sharing or thinking. There is no right or wrong answer to the question. I know that for me, songs can easily fall into this category. The bigger question in this first question is the second one. Once again, you will have to answer according to what you see/find in self-reflection. But Jesus' parable of the sower and the seed come to mind as one thinks about that question. In that parable he says that the seed that falls among the rock pictures the one who hears the word and receives it with joy but this only lasts a short time. Where have we been guilty of treating God's word with some contempt because we have heard it so frequently? Let us repent where we see this, and ask God to fortify us against such temptations.
2. What is the answer to the question, "Why do we need to hear this again"? *(answer on the basis of what is provided in the devotion AND add your answers to it)* In this sermon devotion portion some answers are...that the miracles of Jesus reveal him as true God and the promised Savior. They reveal his power. When do we not need these reminders and need to be strengthened in our conviction about these things. It also mentions that each miracle carries a specific lesson for us. The one we look at this week shows his love and compassion. What other answers did you give?

PAGE 2

1. Why are life and death enemies? The two of these are enemies because God never intended for there to be death in this world. We need to understand just how true it is that death is a violent intrusion into God's good work of creation. It isn't just "a part of life" that one learns to "deal with." When we understand why there is death and that it is an enemy of Life, then we give real consideration to how we can know death isn't the ultimate winner.
2. What is life in the fullest sense of the term? To be bound to God by the most intimate bond of love and trust.
3. What is death in the fullest sense of the term? Being separated from God
4. What happens at physical death? The Bible speaks of three kinds of death: spiritual death, temporal death, and eternal death. All involve separation. **Spiritual death** is the separation of the soul from God and the separation from all the spiritual blessings God provides. By nature, all human begin life spiritually dead. **Temporal death** is the separation of the soul from the body and separation from all the blessing of life here on earth. **Eternal death** is separation from the presence of God and separation from the joys of heaven forever in hell. At physical death, a person's soul and body separate. The body goes to the ground and the soul goes before God and is judged. The soul of the believer is welcomed into the bliss and joy of heaven while the soul of the unbeliever is sent to the torment and misery of hell.

PAGE 3

1. Agree or disagree: Great saints do not like to die. The fear of death is natural, for death is a penalty; therefore it is something sad." Agree. This is actually a quote from Martin Luther. This statement deals truthfully with the reality of death. So much of what the world puts out there reflects either fatalistic resignation or wishful, delusional thinking about death. But once again, it is good to remember that death is a violent intrusion on God's good plan. It is a penalty, therefore it is sad. For the Christian, we seek to walk the narrow middle path. Death was not ever supposed to happen. It is perhaps the loudest and strongest preachment of the law and the reality of our guilt. Yet at the same time, we know the sting of death has been removed because Jesus walked away from the grave alive. Therefore, death becomes something we do not need to be afraid of because God has promised everlasting life to all who believe in Jesus as Savior.
2. Consider the first paragraph again. Why, after that paragraph, would the devotion state: "That means there could be no more fitting or timely words for us. Nothing could be more practical"? If you think about it, much of what we do in a day is done in an effort to try and prevent death. Perhaps a way to see this from a different point of view is that there are a lot of things we don't do in an effort to stay as far

away from death as possible. Then consider the fact that at any moment our earthly life might end (the COVID pandemic, the nightly news, the statistic that 120 people die each minute in the United States, the fact that there have been over 200 casualties on Wisconsin roads this year are strong reminders of that). If so much of our life deals with death (whether consciously or not) it is fitting to hear what God's word has to say on the matter and receive the comfort that he has conquered it.

PAGE 4

1. Why should death, and especially its cause, awaken us to the fact that the goal of achieving a pleasant existence in life is not where all our efforts should be channeled? It is so easy to get caught up in living for nothing more than the here and now. Our sinful nature wants to soften the curse of sin that death proclaims so that one tries to numb themselves against the dull ache of an accusing conscience. So, one tries to do that by making the goal of life a pleasant existence here. One does that by trying to inject meaning into life apart from what God says in his word. But that will lead to a very bad ending. Therefore, death needs to awaken us to the fact that we need to be living for the life to come. After all, our life on this earth - if God is so gracious to us - may be 80 years. But eternity is forever.
2. Why was the woman's dead son able to hear Jesus? Because the power of Jesus' words are stronger than death. The accounts of Jesus raising people from the dead by simply speaking words are so awesome and instructive. Not only does it show his power over death, but it also speaks to the way that spiritual life (faith) is created in the heart of the believer. By nature we are spiritually dead. Dead people can't make themselves alive. So how is spiritual life created if we are dead? In other words, how are we brought to faith? The answer: through the Word. And why should that surprise us when the WORD of Jesus brings physically dead people to life.
3. Besides death, what are some things that remind us that we are not in control? We humans like to be in control. In fact, there are times that we could say that control becomes our god. Take that thought to heart and confess that sin where you see it in yourself. But we are not in control, and sometimes God has some very powerful ways to show us that. Death is certainly one of them. But consider some others: the COVID pandemic; natural disasters; disease; governmental decisions. You probably did and can come up with more.
 - Take a moment to come up with three promises of God or sections of the Bible that remind us that God is in control not only at death but at all times. The entire book of Job; Ephesians 1:18-23; Romans 8:28 – in all things God works for the good of those who love him

PAGE 5

1. We often times are at a loss of what to say to someone who has lost a loved one. When that loved one is a believer, what does this devotion remind us we can say?

As children of God, when we cannot find words to speak, let us turn to God's word and let him speak. At the death of a Christian many of the passages of the Bible apply. We might not want to tell someone "Don't cry." But we can tell them, "Look at Jesus power over death. Because your loved one knew Jesus by faith, that victory is their victory." We can tell them, "Jesus is in charge, not death. That means Jesus will have the final say!" You can remind them that this is the reason Jesus came and rescued us, so that we have an answer at this time when it looks like we have no answer and the future looks so bleak.
2. Jesus, who is true God, acted on behalf of this woman. God's compassion drove him to action on our behalf. How? This question is simply meant to give you the opportunity to think about or discuss the beauty of the gospel once again. God acted on our behalf from the moment sin entered this world. He promised a Savior to our first parents and then guided and ruled history in just the perfect way so that when the time was right, God the Son would enter into this world in the person of Jesus Christ. He acted on our behalf by securing the perfection we need to enter into heaven and also paying the penalty of our sin so that it would not keep us out of heaven. He acted on our behalf by having his apostles and prophets record for us this message of salvation so that we might come to faith and believe it has all been done for us. From beginning to middle to end he has been and is acting on our behalf.

PAGE 6

1. The devotion states that Jesus did the impossible. What was the impossible, and why could no one else do it? The "impossible" is the work of our salvation. The reason we speak of it as "impossible" is

because no one but Jesus could do it. The reason no one else could do it is because no one else could keep God's law perfectly and offer up a precious enough sacrifice to be able to pay for sin. God's Word says, "No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him—the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough" (Psalm 49:7,8). Only the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect could atone for sin. This is a strong reminder that we could never save ourselves. We cannot work our way into God's graces. We cannot do our best so that God will accept us. The only way he will welcome us into heaven is through faith in Jesus perfect life, death and resurrection on our behalf.

2. Take a moment and consider/discuss what your greatest gut-wrenching sadness has been. *Answers will vary.*
3. What reasons has Jesus given us not to cry? There are many answers and many different ways to answer this question. I will give some, but you may have more. He has given us reason not to cry because he undid the curse of sin and has won for us forgiveness and a home in heaven. Through faith in him, we know God is not angry at us. Knowing that God is not angry with us and that the sting of death has been removed from death, we can look forward to the home in heaven that will be ours when life on this earth ends. This truth shapes and colors our everyday life. But it isn't just that, he also gives us strength for the here and now. He promises us grace and every blessing. He promises us the strength to get through difficult times. He gives us family and friends to help in times of sadness. He gives us blessed memories to hold onto. The ways that he helps us are endless.
 - Do Christians who grieve openly because of death show a weakness of faith? No. We are told that Jesus wept because of death (John 11:35). Even though his tears flowed more from the suffering and sadness that he saw sin cause, they were real tears at death none-the-less. Also, in 1 Thessalonians we read, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Notice, we aren't told not to grieve. We simply are told we don't need to grieve as if we have no hope.

PAGE 7

1. The devotion states that Jesus makes your pain and hurts his own. What is the proof that he will and does do this? The proof is found in the fact that he even made our sins his own, and in so doing, suffered the penalty for them. All of Jesus promises flow from that promise kept.
2. Throughout this devotion, Life has been capitalized. Who is it referring to? Jesus. Jesus is life because as the second person of our Triune God he was present at creation when life was given to this earth – to Adam and Eve. He is life because he rose from the dead and conquered sin so that there can be forgiveness. He is life because it is the message of his work and merits for our salvation that bring us to spiritual life and faith. He is life because he is the one who will give eternal life to all believers – body and soul - when they are raised on the last day.
3. What happens when death meets Life? What does that mean for the believer? Life conquers death! It means everything for the believer. It means peace and comfort now in the midst of trials, hardships, pain and sadness – yes even death. It means the promise and guarantee of eternal life in heaven for all who believe.