

THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON

The Miracle That Shook John's Faith

Luke 7:11-30

Sunday School Lesson 8

Miracles of Jesus

3/3/2019

Introduction: In this week's lesson, we will take a look at one of the least talked about miracles of Jesus' ministry: the raising of the widow's son in Nain. Interestingly, this miracle represented the greatest show of Jesus' power at that point in His earthly ministry. He had already done all types of great miracles and wonders, but He had not yet raised anyone from the dead. Such a miracle had only been performed three times in the Old Testament, and it was a miracle reserved for only the greatest of God's prophets. Specifically, only Elijah and Elisha were ever humanly responsible (through the power of God) for raising someone from the dead prior to this miracle performed by Jesus. The Lord came to show that He is the Prophet, Priest, and King. It was not just a coincidence that Jesus performed this miracle. It was done to show His power as a Prophet. Three resurrections were performed by prophets in the Old Testament, and Jesus performed three resurrections prior to His own resurrection after His death on the cross. Elijah first resurrected a widow's son. Jesus first resurrected a widow's son. The harmony between the Old Testament and New Testament is clear. Jesus proved Himself as a Prophet. Unfortunately, this amazing miracle also caused the great John the Baptist to have a brief moment of doubt. As we look more at this story, we will see a wide variety of truths and applications that we can make from all of the characters involved.

I. THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON SHOWS US THAT JESUS COMFORTS US LIKE NOBODY ELSE IS CAPABLE OF DOING. (LUKE 7:12-13)

A. Notice that the widow had many people to comfort her, but she found real comfort in Christ (Luke 7:12). Given that the woman had lost both her husband and her only son, the responsibility to care for her fell on all of the people of her small town. This is one of the reasons why we find that there was a great crowd that came with her as she mourned her son's passing and prepared to say goodbye to his body. It is not hard to picture what those other people were doing. They were walking with her and trying to comfort her. They probably were saying all of the same things that we often say today. "It's going to be okay." "I'm here for you if you need anything." "I know what you are going through. You'll get through it with time." There were probably some who said nothing but were there just to cry alongside her. Others may have offered financial help to cover her expenses. The people genuinely tried to help this dear woman. If you have ever experienced grief, though, you know that this comfort often lands flat. Grief hurts. Loss is painful. Nobody knew exactly what she was feeling or thinking, except for Jesus Christ. As He sees this woman, He isn't just assuming her pain. He feels her pain. He knows the heaviness of her heart. Fortunately, He was able to offer her true relief from her pain. This was not something that she could have found from anyone in that crowd.

B. Notice that Jesus offered her an answer that ran contrary to what everyone else was probably offering (Luke 7:13). As Jesus was filled with compassion for this woman, He approached her to offer her words of encouragement. What is interesting is the advice that He gave. It would have been in direct contrast to what everyone else was saying to her. Simply, He told her: "Weep not." Keep in mind that He had not performed the miracle yet. What reason was there for her to stop shedding her tears? Her son was gone. There is little doubt that the other people there had encouraged her to cry. Her friends probably told her to let it all out. An outward display of grief and sadness was an appropriate response, yet Jesus told her to stop crying. Of course, we know why He told her this. He was about to perform a miracle that was negate the need for her feeling of loss. She would briefly be reunited again with her son. When it comes to the sadness and pain of loss in this world, we too can take comfort in knowing that this loss is just momentary. The world says that there is nothing but sadness at death, but the Bible tells us that there is rejoicing. That's because death is not the end but the beginning. She grieved for a time, but when she, her son, and Jesus were all united together, there was no more crying but shouting. What a beautiful picture for us that are here on earth waiting for that great reunion day in Heaven!

II. THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON SHOWS US THE COMPLETENESS OF RESTORATION THAT COMES FROM THE LORD. (LUKE 7:14-15)

A. Notice that the young man began to speak (Luke 7:15). When Jesus told the young man to arise, he sat up and began to speak. As I studied for this lesson, it caught my attention that the Bible focused on the fact that the man spoke, but It does not tell us what he actually said. This places the emphasis only on the fact that he was speaking. Jesus had not just raised a corpse to involuntary or short-term movement. He was not just some vegetable of his former self. I believe the young man spoke as if he had never died. He was immediately engaged in conversation. We can ponder without fulfillment regarding what he talked about. Perhaps, he told them about his time in death. Maybe he said that which was left unsaid when he died. He might have just spoken praises to God. Regardless, it was clear from this that the young man was back. He was the same person.

B. Notice that he was delivered back to his mother, and he no longer had the infirmity that had caused his death (Luke 7:15). We don't know what caused this young man to perish. He lived in a day where common sicknesses could lead to death. The Bible does not tell us the sickness because it really did not matter which sickness was responsible. The Lord had the power to restore him back to full health. When we consider resurrection, we must also consider the decaying of the body. It had probably been several days since the young man had perished. There was typically a time of personal grieving prior to the burial. Again, none of this mattered. The young man could have been dead for decades, and the Lord still had the power to resurrect and restore him. When Jesus delivered him back to his mother, He delivered him whole. This is a great application for us of that bodily resurrection that we have to look forward to. Jesus will deliver us whole. This also shows us the restoration of salvation. We were dead to sin, but Jesus restores us as if we were never tarnished by sin's deadly forces!

III. THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON SHOWS US THAT SATAN CAN TAKE SOMETHING MEANT FOR GOOD AND PRESENT IT AS AN OFFENSE. (LUKE 7:16-19, 23)

A. Notice that the rumors that John heard should have caused him to rejoice (Luke 7:16-18). When the people saw what Jesus had done, they were afraid. This was a reverent fear because of the power that He displayed. They all glorified God together, and they acknowledge that there was a great prophet among them. Truly, God had visited them. It was such an impressive miracle that they began to spread rumors around about this great prophet. The rumor reached its way to John the Baptist's disciples, who went and told it to him. John was currently in prison. He had already professed that Jesus was the One that had been sent. He was the Lamb that had come to save them from their sins. One would expect that John would have rejoiced when he heard the great things that Jesus had been doing throughout the area.

B. Notice that John was offended at the thought of Jesus as a prophet (Luke 7:19, 23). John did not respond with joy at the news of the miracle. Instead, he took offense. Why? The reason is the common one that we see with the Jews during the time of Christ. John did not preach that a great prophet would come. He preached that there was a Messiah coming. He was coming to establish the kingdom of God. The Pharisees tried to create jealousy previously between John and Jesus, but John responded: "He must increase, and I must decrease." John had no problem taking a backseat to the ministry of Jesus because He understood that Jesus was the Messiah. Yet, he was now concerned that Jesus was a prophet. Had he spent all of this time pointing to Jesus only to be let down by Jesus not being all that he thought that He was? John could not stand this thought. It bothered him that there was talk about a prophet. From his perspective, John was the prophet. He did not totally grasp the ministry of Jesus.

IV. THE RAISING OF THE WIDOW'S SON SHOWS US THAT A DEPARTURE, DISCOURAGEMENT, AND DISAPPOINTMENT LEAD TO DOUBT. (LUKE 7:16-30)

A. Notice that John struggled with doubt because he did not personally get to see Christ' ministry and because he battled disappointment and discouragement (Luke 7:16-20). John was a great prophet. In fact, Jesus said that he was more than a prophet. He was the chosen messenger. It is not hard to see why this great man had a moment of doubt in his life. The information that he was receiving was all second hand. He did not get the benefit of having a personal relationship with Christ. If John had been out of prison, he probably would have never questioned Jesus. Yet, prison had started to wear on him. He had been in there for over a year, and any hope of escape was fleeting. He may have been hoping that Jesus was going to establish His kingdom now and free him from prison. The reality of John's situation was becoming clearer and clearer to him. He was going to be the first martyr for the cause of Christ. The disciples had the benefit of being warned by Christ of their future persecution. John was experiencing something that no one else was going through.

B. Notice that Jesus reinforced John's faith with patience and love (Luke 7:21-30). Jesus could have responded harshly to John. Instead, He gave an answer to John's disciples by showing them the goodness and power of the work that He was doing. He then sent them back with a message of reassurance. He told John: "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." John was one who would have understood the uniqueness of a ministry. After all, his ministry was very unique. Jesus essentially instructed John to keep the faith and don't take offense to the manner in which Jesus fulfilled His ministry. Jesus was lovingly patient with John because He knew that man's heart. He knew his weariness and his hope in the Messiah. In moments of doubt, the Lord wants to offer us his loving and patient reassurance. John accepted the reassurance that Jesus gave. Do we do the same?

Conclusion: There are essentially two parts to this lesson. The first part reminds us of the comfort that we find in Christ and the hope that we have through salvation. Death is inevitable for all of us, but we don't have to wallow in sorrow like this world does. If we are living in sorrow, it's because we haven't looked to Him for comfort. In the second part, we see the struggles of doubt and discouragement that we can have in this life. In both cases, the lesson is that we must look to Christ for help in overcoming the feelings and emotions that Satan will use against us.