

HOPE FOR MOMS

LUKE 7:11-17

Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow.

And a large crowd from the city was with her.

When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.

Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

It was a spring morning in 1994 when Bob Gresham picked up the rental truck. He and his wife, Edith, were moving their young family to a larger house.

Bob is a cautious guy, so before he cranked the truck he checked around the tires to make sure his kids and their toys were out of the way. The coast seemed clear.

He figured 18 month-old, Jeffrey, was playing among the boxes stacked in the garage, but Bob was wrong.

As he backed the box truck down the driveway Bob rolled its wheels over his son, crushing his body, killing him instantly. In

the midst of the commotion little Jeffrey had ran out of the garage to say "*bye-bye*" to Daddy.

Very few situations in life are as difficult to deal with as the death of a child. As Lee Caldwell said eight years after the death of his son, Dale, "*If your father dies your past dies, but if your child dies your future dies. It's hard for people to understand the feeling*"...

I'm confident that's an understatement!

The death of a child rips open the heart of a parent and leaves behind an enormous, gaping hole. And such was the heart of this widow from the city of Nain.

What caused her son's death we are not told, but whatever it was the results were unmistakable - *grief, anguish, heartache, unspeakable pain*. The child she brought into the world, she now escorts to the grave!

This woman is a volcano of sorrow and despair. Deep within this mother's heart molten misery bubbles up - a lava-flow of tears streaks down her cheeks.

Remember when the old man Simeon met Mary of Nazareth in the Temple with her eight day old son, Jesus. He prophesied over the baby and predicted His death. Simeon told Mary, "*Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also...*" He foresaw her pain as her Son grimaced, and convulsed, and died on a cross.

Every mother silently hopes she dies before her child. Nothing pierces her soul like the death of a child.

And to compound the grief of this mother we learn from our

text she was not only burying her son, but she was reliving another tragedy which had occurred just a few months earlier. She had walked this same path with the corpse of her beloved husband. Verse 12 says she was not only a bereaved mother, but **“a widow.”**

Death is supposed to be like lightning - never striking in the same spot twice. But it can and it does! *Just ask this woman.* She's felt this pain twice. She's buried a husband, and now a son... And this was her **“only son.”**

Perhaps she had a daughter, but she no longer has a son to carry on her husband's name, and provide a roof over her head. *This woman is living a nightmare...*

Author, Max Lucado, paints a vivid portrait of this woman from Nain, **"She is the victim of this funeral. She is the one with no arm around her shoulder. She is the one who will sleep in the empty house tonight. She is the one who will make dinner for one and conversation with none. She is the one most violated."**

I would suppose that much of this woman's grief was *the result of regret.* She's sad over all she'll now miss out on - *a son's smile, his hugs, his visits, even the special celebrations he had arranged on Mother's Day.*

And speaking of Mother's Day... Today is that day!

I've heard it said, **"Mother's Day is when everybody waits on mom and she pretends she doesn't mind the extra work."** Believe me, this mother would've given anything to have her son over for dinner - *to cook his favorite meal, and then to wash his dirty dishes.*

Nothing would've given her more joy than to clean a load of his laundry, or help him with an overdue car note... But the days for all that are over now. All this mother can do for her son is to see that he gets a decent burial, and that fresh flowers adorn his grave.

Let me say to the young moms here today, I'm not trying to be morbid. Odds are your children will long outlive you. You'll see your grandchildren, and your kids will care for you in your old age... *And yet, the days of you nurturing your child will be over quickly!*

I often warn young parents, "don't blink!" A child's moldable days are over before you want them to be.

Here's a mother's poem. Moms, listen carefully, it has a message for you... "Just yesterday it seems my children played upon the floor, and I wiped countless fingerprints from window pane and door. I kissed away a thousand tears and darned sock after sock, and tried to keep pace with the hands that raced around the clock. And often when at the end of the day, too tired to sleep, in bed I'd lay, I'd think how nice when, children grown, my time again would be my own.

So now I sit and rock alone. My hands at rest, the work all done; no little tots upon the floor, no fingerprints upon the door... No socks to mend, or bruises to kiss... ah me! How could I have known I'd miss - the very things I grudge to do. Dear God, if only there might be, someone again who needed me!"

Trust me mom, the day will come when you'll give anything to kiss a boo-boo, or fix a meal, or pick up a dirty pair of

pants... You'll miss the bedtime prayers, the little league games, reading stories on rainy days...

I know it's hard to wrap your mind around right now, but the day is coming when your van will go a whole year without needing new tires!... Mom, there'll be a day soon when your child will no longer need you, and when that day arrives, it will be filled with regrets!

Understand, a Hebrew funeral procession was quite a sight! The rabbi presiding over the graveside service led the way. As he walked toward the graveyard, he proclaimed the good deeds done by the deceased.

The rabbi was followed by *musicians* and *mourners*.

The *musicians* played dismal, melancholy dirges, while the *mourners* cried out in loud lamentations.

All the weeping and wailing blared like a siren. In fact, to the Jewish people the more outlandish and ostentatious the mourning and grieving the better!

Behind the mourners came the corpse. It was carried on a wicker stretcher. The hair and nails were cut. The body was washed, anointed, and wrapped. The face was left uncovered - or draped with a lightweight veil - and the deceased's arms were folded over his chest.

Friends and family served as pall bearers. Frequent stops in the procession allowed new pall bearers to participate. Each time the parade of misery slowed down mourners erupted again with deafening wails.

Behind the corpse came the rest of the family and friends. They were followed by a crowd of onlookers.

Today, when you see a funeral procession on the road its common courtesy - *respect for the dead* - to stop your car and pull over - or stand at attention. Jewish protocol went further. It required, if possible, for the passersby to join the procession. This accounts for the large crowd coming out of the gate of Nain.

But the fascinating point about this occasion is **there were two crowds approaching the same gate at the same time!** Jesus and the folks following Him were coming in, as the funeral procession was headed out.

On my trips to Israel I've seen firsthand how the ancients constructed their city gates. Their gates were always narrow and built at sharp, right-angles.

The configuration kept an invading army from entering a city with a head of steam. To pass through the gate, soldiers had to slow down, align in single file; then twist and turn through the gate. This made it easier for defenders of the city to stave off an attack.

Imagine the confusion, chaos, commotion that day when these two crowds collided in the gate of Nain.

The funeral procession that was exiting the city had about a ten minute walk to the graveyard, which was located beside the main road. Jesus and His band had just walked by that graveyard on their way into the city... *I'm sure Jesus noticed the freshly dug grave!*

And realize the contrast between the two crowds...

The funeral procession was walking sadness. They paved

the road with tears. *Folks were mourning death.*

Whereas the crowd that followed Jesus was a party on parade. Their path was paved with laughter and singing. The day before in Capernaum Jesus had healed a centurion's servant. They'd seen a miracle and were hoping for more! *They were celebrating life.*

What contrasting groups crowded into this one gate at the same time! One group was *weeping*, while one group was *rejoicing*. One group had been ripped off by the grim reaper, the other group had been made victorious by the power of God's Son. Here's a collision not only of people and bodies, but of spiritual realities.

This is both a physical **and** spiritual showdown.

Occurring in the gate of Nain is a conflict between light and darkness. It's a head-on crash between life and death - pain and peace - between sorrow and joy!

And in the midst of the mayhem Jesus sees this grieving mother... Notice what Luke says in verse 13, "**When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her.**"

Notice this, Jesus has a soft-spot in His heart for aching hearts - *especially a mother's broken-heart.*

On the cross - in the midst of His own agony - in the middle of His daring mission to save the world... Jesus had compassion on *His* mother, and took the time to turn her over to the care of John. I know it was His *own mom*, but I believe it proves Jesus cares about *all moms!* Jesus knows being a mother is a tough job!

I ran across a Help Wanted sign that reads, "Long hours, low pay, little time off. Must be willing to work overtime, weekends, holidays, and summer vacation. Energy, imagination, intelligence, endurance, flexibility required. Must have ability to lead, instruct and guide; coupled with a warm and loving, affectionate personality. On the job training offered. *Job title: Mom.*"

Mom, Jesus knows you've got a tough job. He wants you to know He's in your corner! He had compassion on this mom, *and Jesus has compassion on all moms.*

Once a husband and his daughter were looking through he and his wife's wedding album. The dad was thumbing through the photos, reminiscing about his wedding day - when his little girl asked him, "Daddy is this the day you got Mommy to come and work for us?"

It reminds me of the kindergarten teacher who showed her class a magnet. She explained how paper clips and other items were attracted to the magnet. She wanted to make sure the class understood the term, so she asked again, "What starts with the letter "M" and picks up things?" A little boy answered, "*Mom.*"

And then there was the teenage girl who came down the stairs on Mother's Day and saw her mom doing the dishes. She said, "Mom, you shouldn't have to do the dishes on Mother's Day." The mom was touched by her daughter's thoughtfulness. She was just about to take off her apron when her teenage daughter added, "*Don't worry Mom, those dishes will keep until tomorrow.*"

Mothers of *little girls*, and *little boys*, and *teenagers* all have a tough job. Duties are endless. Mothers get tired. They're taken for granted - and Dad doesn't always help like he should - *but Jesus knows....*

Jesus loves you, mom, and He understands what you're going through. He wants to comfort your heart and help carry your heavy load. **Jesus will give you the energy to *carry on* even when you feel like *giving up!***

All moms need to memorize Galatians 6:9 and recite it daily. **"Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."**

World famous anthropologist, Ashley Montague, who was not a Christian BTW, but made a true observation, **"Women are, by nature, endowed with the most important of adaptive traits, the capacity to love. And this is the principle they must teach men. Once women know this, they'll realize that no man can ever play as important a role in the life of humanity as a mentally healthy woman... Being a good wife, a good mother, in short, a good homemaker is the most important of all occupations in the world. **It surely cannot be too often pointed out that the making of human beings is a far more important vocation than the making of anything else**, and that in the formative years of a child's life, the mother is best equipped to provide firm foundations upon which one can subsequently build."**

I'm afraid our modern world has lost sight of the importance of motherhood! We've assumed that *day care* and *nurseries* and *preschool* can do as good, if not a better job, than mom. That's simply not true!

As one mother put it, "I work nonstop eighteen hours a day, 365 days a year. I receive no paycheck, no word of thanks and, nowadays, no respect from the media. I am a stay-at-home mom whose hope is that 10 to 20 years down the road my toil will pay off." *It will, mom!*

If you don't lose heart - if you don't grow weary in doing good - in the end you'll reap a bountiful blessing!

Once, a little girl in the Christmas play forgot her line, but her mom - sitting on the front row - came to the rescue. She mouthed the words so her little girl could see, "I am the light of the world." The little girl suddenly smiled and shouted, "My mom is the light of the world!" And it's true, *mothers are the light of the world!*

It's been said, "Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the world's rough hand cannot erase."

A mother's influence on her child is immeasurable.

And one day God will reward every persistent, godly mom, who doesn't grow weary of well doing, just as He rewarded the mom He bumped into in the gate of Nain.

What compassion Jesus had on this grieving woman. The Lord said to this mother, "do not weep."

The rabbis had a formula they used at funerals. They would say to the friends of the mourning family, "Weep with them, all you who are bitter of heart." But Jesus says the opposite to this woman, "weep not." He tells the lady who lost her husband, and now her son, "dam up your tears - dry up your eyes - stop your grieving."

If Jesus hadn't acted so quickly on the heels of his

comment, He would've been accused of callousness toward a mourning mom. It might've been considered **abuse!** *How do you tell a grieving mom to stop crying?*

But no sooner had Jesus said the words, that He reached out His hand, grabbed the coffin, stopped the procession; and then He spoke to the corpse as if the dead man could hear, **"young man, I say to you, arise."**

On three different occasions the NT records Jesus raising a person from the dead - **Jarius' daughter**, and **Lazarus**, and **this widow's son** - and its provocative that all three times Jesus literally spoke to the corpse...

He worked other miracles by an assortment of methods. He told a lame man to take up his bed. He touched blind eyes. On one occasion He mixed spit and dirt, and smeared mud on a blind man's eyes...

Jesus used these techniques to stir up the faith of the person in need, but each time Jesus *raises the dead* the person's faith has nothing to do with it.

Jesus simply speaks to them and they arise!

Obviously, the voice of Jesus spans the deep, broad chasm we call death. His command, controls the spirit world. Whenever Jesus says **"jump"** - angels and demons, ask **"how high?"** Graves open at His word.

People today will pay a visit to a gravesite to speak to the corpse underneath the tombstone, **but the corpse doesn't hear!**... In fact, Scripture forbids the living from trying to communicate with the dead.

Yet one day Jesus will return in the clouds. He'll speak and

the dead in Christ all over the world will rise.

Here we're told Jesus spoke to this young man, and in response the boy sat up and talked! He was alive again! The King of Heaven and Earth, Ruler of Time and Eternity, Lord of Life and Death - Jesus - called a son back from the spirit realm, and that son obeyed.

And verse 15 records the intriguing thing that happened next, "**(Jesus) presented him** *(or literally, gave him back)* **to his mother.**" Jesus *called* the son back from the dead; then *gave* him back to his mother.

Death took this mother's boy away from her, but Jesus stepped in on behalf of this mother's broken heart. Jesus presented this boy back to his mama.

And imagine the woman's reaction! One commentary reads, "**Language is too feeble to express her joy.**"

I believe every mom should have one overarching concern for her children. Yes, she cares about meals, clothes, shoes, a good education - but a mom's chief concern should be about *her child's spiritual condition*.

Whether her child is alive or dead? Is he or she alive to God or is that son or daughter dead to God?

A mom knows that though she brought her child into the world, she can't guarantee that child heavenly passage into the world to come. *Only God can do that.*

G. Campbell Morgan was one of England's greatest preachers. He had four sons who also were good preachers. The youngest was named Howard. Once Howard was asked,

"Who's the greatest preacher in your family?" Without hesitation he replied, *"My Mom!"*

All mothers make excellent preachers.

Moms, know their kids, and have a sense for where their kids are at with the Lord... *if her child's heart is slipping away a mom feels it... if his faith is holding strong she feels that too...* A mom is in tune with the heart of her child. Often, even more so than their dad.

Mama bear is aware of the spiritual dangers her kids face... *The temptations, discouragement, hurts, peer pressure, isolation, confusion, the lies, and the bullies.* A mother knows her brood and she prays desperately for them, as she continues to preach to them.

And still, no matter how good a parent you are your child can fall in with the wrong crowd and be led astray. He or she can develop friends who have bad habits.

It's sad, but **rebellion is contagious!**

There's a sinful defiance in the heart of every child. The Bible teaches it's inborn. We're birthed with a propensity toward sin and selfishness. Job 5:7 puts it, *"Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."* And all it takes is for a single spark from the outside to set that rebellion ablaze in your child's heart...

This is why both godly mothers and fathers fight a battle of influence against the world, the flesh, and the devil over the mind, and heart, and will of their children.

And this means that a confrontation is inevitable.

In the life of every mother's son or daughter there's coming

a collision of light and darkness - of life and death - of happiness and sorrow - of God and the devil - of Christ and the world - of the Spirit and the flesh!

Every child must pass through the gate of Nain.

The word "**Nain**" actually has two definitions. In one context it can mean "**affliction**" - in another, "**beauty**."

And your child's life will be *troublesome* or *beautiful* depending on the choices he or she makes. Each child passes through *the gate of Nain*, or *gate of decision*...

And here is what I've found to be the toughest part of parenting... Every mom and dad wish they could walk with their children through this gate, but they can't.

Mom, as much as you'd like, you can't walk with your child through the gate of decision. It's too narrow. It's big enough for only one person to pass at a time.

Two crowds are pressing in and colliding at this gate. There's chaos and confusion. This makes your child vulnerable. It's possible to make a wrong decision.

Your child can fall in with the crowd going to hell, or stand with the crowd headed to heaven. And it's far, far too easy for your child to end up in the wrong group.

We wish our children didn't have to decide on their own, but they do. Mom, you can prepare your child when he or she is young, *and prepare them you must*, but as much as you'd like to be there, the day will come when your child will pass through the gate of Nain by their lonesome - without you. They'll have to deal with the impact of that collision on their own.

Mom, let me repeat, "You can't walk it with them or decide it for them." Yet here's where our passage gives to parents a remarkable hope. For when a believer's child passes through the gate, **Jesus will be there!**

In the gate of decision, at the crucial moment, Jesus will be there to meet your child. *He'll stop him - touch his wicker stretcher - speak to her - awaken her mind to the truth. Jesus can even quicken his soul from the dead. **Jesus has done it before, He can do it again.***

Because Jesus has compassion on moms, He'll be there, when your child passes through the gate!

When a child's ears begin to hear Satan's serenade of sin and death - when he or she is tempted to fall in step with the world's living funeral procession... I know every mom wishes she could be there, but she can't!

It's been said, "Every mom is like a Moses. She cannot enter the land. She prepares a world she will not see." But mom, **Jesus is your child's Joshua.** For when Moses' influence ended, Joshua's began.

Moses got the children to the point of decision, but Joshua won the victory. And just as Joshua took over for Moses, Jesus promises to take over for you, Mom! In the days and years ahead, trust your child to Jesus!

The book of Ecclesiastes was written from the viewpoint of man without God. Chapter 2:18-19 in TLB reads, "I am disgusted about this, that I must leave the fruits of all my hard work to others. And who can tell whether my son will be a

wise man or a fool? And yet all I have will be given to him - how discouraging!"

The writer of Ecclesiastes was Solomon, the richest and wisest man who ever lived, yet he apparently had no confidence that when it came time for his son to make his own decisions he would make the right ones.

Such is the predicament of all parents *and especially the parent without God*. Yet if you're a Christian mom or dad you have a hope. Jesus is there at the gate of decision. He'll be there with power to touch your child.

Usually, when we discuss Jesus' famous parable of the Prodigal Son, we're quick to apply the story to God's forgiveness *of us*, but we fail to notice in the story the father's faith **before** his son's return.

The dad in the story watched his son leave home with his inheritance, knowing the boy would travel to a foreign land, waste away his wealth, and it take years for him to come to his senses. Yet the father stayed behind and let it happen. *Proving it takes enormous faith to turn loose and let go of a child you dearly love!*

The father of the prodigal believed the passage in Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it..."

This dynamic of a parent **letting go** is seen nearly every Sunday morning in the Calvary Chapel nursery.

Camp outside the doors and you'll see a common sight - a *new mom agonizing over placing her baby in the nursery for the first time*. She has to turn loose and let go, and trust her

child to another. Watch her plant a final kiss on her newborn's cheek for the fifteenth time. The nursery worker has to pry the kid out of her arms.

And wait until the child's first day at school...

I'll never forget, from the time Kathy dropped off our firstborn, to the time she picked Zach up... she sat at home and cried. In the beginning, my wife had a hard time handling the fact her little guy was growing up...

Of course, by now we've seen our kids get their driver's license... go on their first date... walk the aisle to be married... buy a house... even have kids of their own...

Parenting is a process of letting go.

But here's what every Christian mom and dad needs to know. Here's **a word of hope...** I believe with all my heart that when the time comes - when my children go where I can't follow - **that my Lord Jesus will go with them.** He'll be there for them. He'll meet them at the gate of Nain. His light will collide with the darkness!

My Lord loves my kids more than I do!

Here was a woman who had given up on her son, but now Jesus is giving him back to her! As verse 15 tells us, **"And He presented him to his mother."**

Whenever we perform a Baby Dedication we present the child to the Lord. And I wish that was the last time we had to do it, but it's not! We present our kids to God daily. We have to turn them over again and again.

Yet here's the truth we can apply from this morning's text - *one day Jesus will present our children back to us!* If you've

committed your life to raise your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; then Jesus will commit Himself to you! He'll be there when you can't be. He'll shine His light when darkness rolls in.

Even when your child seems to be dead to the things of God... *Jesus will stop him, touch him - He'll speak to her and jar her memories - and even bring him to life...*

Mom, when other people give up on your kids - when you don't know where they are, or what they're doing - Jesus will be there in the gate. He'll watch over them!

And one day Mom, Jesus will present your child back to you: *alive, whole, forgiven, speaking His praise!*

Here's hope for moms: **Give your children to Jesus and one day Jesus will give them back to you!**