

The Character of Jesus 19
Raising the Son of the Widow of Nain
Luke 7:11 – 17

- Characteristic: Compassion
 - Notes:
 - Nain, a small farming village, is about 30 miles by road, but 25 miles if straight, from Capernaum.
 - Tombs were customarily outside the city due to uncleanness, although the tombs of the kings were inside the City of David (2 Kings 16:20, 21:18, 26)
 - The death of an only son of a widow meant that the line would die out unless Levirate marriage was used (Matthew 22:30, Deuteronomy 25:5 – 10). The widow might return to her father's house or join the house of the eldest brother.
 - The number of witnesses was especially large due to the entourage with Jesus plus the funeral procession.
 - (13) Jesus' motivation in this scene was compassion, not to make a point.
 - The rules about uncleanness due to a dead body are in Numbers 19:11 – 22. Touching the coffin, technically, would not make one unclean. But, the rabbis, over the centuries, had taught that anything associated with the dead body made one unclean, even walking on the ground under which a body had been buried or a tomb was located. Jesus made Himself unclean at other times (*e.g.*, touching a leper), but this occasion is debatable.
 - Other passages when Jesus' motivation was given as compassion: Matthew 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34, Mark 1:41, 6:34, 8:2. Those on whom He had compassion ranged from individuals to large groups.
 - (14) Jesus spoke to the dead person, as with Lazarus (John 11:43). The effect was immediate and complete, not a slow cure of one seriously ill.
 - (16) The people were fearful and declared Jesus to be a prophet.
 - Previous resurrections were limited: widow's son by Elijah (1 Kings 17:17 – 24), the Shunammite woman's son by Elisha (2 Kings 4), the dead man who was touched by the dead body of Elisha (2 Kings 13:20,21)
 - People often were described as fearful in the presence of an act of God (including the appearance of angels).
 - The proclamation of John the Baptist (John 1:29 – 37, 3:22 – 36) apparently was not widely accepted. People were willing to declare Jesus a prophet, but not the Messiah.
 - (17) The report spread far further than just rural Galilee, but also throughout Judea.
- Applications:
 - Do we act by compassion?
 - The deserving?
 - Without additional motivation?
 - Do we accomplish the impossible through our compassion?
 - Do we present interactions with God (in any of His presentations) as fearful or comforting?
 - Do we declare Jesus as king of this world (also redeemer, *et al*) or just a messenger?
 - Does our remarkable message spread great distances?