

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
26th October 2021**

READINGS

Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;
but those who hope in the LORD
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 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. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.” 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.

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.

Luke 7:11-17

REFLECTION

As a Minister of the Gospel, one of the tasks I have is to preside at funerals. Over the years I have taken hundreds of funerals. Each one different and each family different. I still have the notes from every funeral I have ever done, and I can still read them and remember the family. I see this as one of the truly great privileges of ministry, to be able to offer comfort, sympathy, support, and hope based on the glorious Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. To be able to stand with the family and offer that love when no one else wants to look them in the eye, because death is a scary thing and folk never know what to say.

But there is also, in such moments, a feeling of impotence. I can offer hope for the future, but I cannot reverse what has happened in the immediate past. I can offer comfort for the present, but I cannot fill the gap that has been left in people's lives. And sometimes the heartache is so sad and the circumstances so painful, and you just wish you could do something to reverse what has happened.

So, it was with the widow at Nain.

She has lost her son; there is no mention of a husband, so presumably she has lost him too. Her future is bleak, not least because in a world without social care she had no security, No one to look after her.

Jesus enters into the situation with strange words and even stranger actions. Words and actions that at first glance seem totally out of place. He says to the widow, "Don't cry." And then He touches the funeral board, so that all attention will be focused on Him as He addresses the carefully wrapped corpse. "Young man I say to you, get up!"

Jesus offers what I cannot, I can't change the situation, but Jesus can. Jesus doesn't wrestle in prayer to His Father. He doesn't struggle in deep spiritual warfare. He simply commands the corpse to get up. And His command reverses the powers of darkness and death! His command transforms a funeral procession into a family reunion. That's who Jesus really is.

Trouble and tragedy are real. Evil and death are real. They come not just in the form of the death of loved one, but in all sorts of ways. Daily news recounts tragic story after tragic story - premature deaths, fractured relationships, and broken dreams. Indeed, we need not turn to any newspaper for an accounting of the world's troubles and sorrows. We have only to look at our own friends and neighbours and families. We have only to look into our own lives and hearts, to know the reality of hurt.

Jesus never denied the reality of pain. He never turned away from suffering in the eyes of another person. Jesus never said to his disciples on the stormy Sea of Galilee, "This is no storm. The storm is in your mind." Jesus, the healer and power-giver, never insulted people by telling them their problems weren't real. He never told the sick they were never really sick or that their illness had no pain or reality. He never told people that death wasn't real, nor did he offer this widowed mother any glib platitudes to soothe her grieving heart.

Instead, he said to the storm, "Peace, be still." And it was. He said to the dead young man "Get up and live" and he did. And whatever it is in our lives, or in the lives of those we

love and care about, the point of this passage is that Jesus can make the difference. The point of this passage is that Jesus will make the difference.

PRAYER

God who loves us,
And gives everything for us,
We pray that every day you provide reminders of your love,
Reassure us that we are not alone,
And open our eyes to see your company.
In the darkest of times let your light shine,
So that we never lose hope,
For you are with us
And when we are at our best
grant that we can worship you wholeheartedly,
For you are with us.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

