

s/9/15/13

INI

Luke 7:11-17

Dear Fellow Redeemed by the blood of God's own Son,

Tears are common to us, and I'm not talking about the tears we may cry over an onion! We have seen the tears of the drunkard, and those who are in pain. One day last week I saw the eyes of a penitent Christian well up with tears. On the same day I saw tears of quiet joy forced from the eyes of a Christian who was overwhelmed with thankfulness.

There are also tears in our text this morning. But let us all rejoice in this lesson recorded by Luke. For here we see that

TEARS ARE WIPED AWAY WHEN THE LORD OF LIFE MEETS THE PRINCE OF DEATH!

I.

The event happened in the little city of Nain. "Nain" signifies beauty or loveliness. This was a beautiful city nestled beneath a mountain in Galilee, not far from Capernaum. But death is not impressed with the beauty or peace of this world. **"Behold, a dead man was being carried out!"**

Doctor Luke does not say, "behold" because he was not accustomed to seeing death. No doubt he had seen death up close many times in his line of work. But Death was not originally in the world. Genesis 3 and Romans 5 teach us that **"Death entered the world"** through the disobedience of Adam. Now "Death passes upon all men, because all have sinned." ([Rom. 5:12](#)) Psalm 90 says: **"You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh."**

The worst thing about Death for the unbeliever is the terrible and eternal judgment that follows. For Hebrews 9:27 tells us that **"it is appointed for men to die once, but after this comes the judgment."** Every corpse, every funeral and graveyard preaches a sermon that ought to regularly shock the impenitent sinner to his spiritual senses!

The widow was weeping at the death of her only son. How she would miss him! But this was also a very personal matter to her. She was also a sinner, and might have died long before her son. She had

sinned by doing what God forbids, and she had failed to do all that God commands. Perhaps she remembered how she had failed her son from time to time. Now he was gone and she felt alone with her grief.

Not quite! For when the Lord **"saw her He had compassion on her and said to her, Do not weep."** We are not told by Luke that this poor widow was a penitent believer in her Savior God. But we do remember what Jesus told some impenitent, unbelieving women in Jerusalem who cried their eyes out as they watched Jesus bearing His cross to His death. To them he said, **"Weep for yourselves!"** To those Who believe in Him he says, **"Weep not!"**

It is indeed a sad funeral where the preacher says only "Don't cry, for he is in a better place;" Or, don't cry, his suffering is over." The sins of him who died, as well as the sins of those who grieve, must be met by the Word of the Savior of sinners, Who says to all who believe, **"Weep not!"**

Our Lord would speak very personally and seriously in those days of grief. So let us not put off the day of our own repentance. We may die young like the widow's son. Above all, whenever death overtakes us or our loved ones, let us all flee to Jesus and invite others to do the same, for He is ready to receive every sin-burdened soul that comes to Him for rest!
(Mt. 11:28)

II.

Christians shed tears when their loved ones die. Abraham wept when Sarah died. Jesus wept at the tomb of His friend, Lazarus. The Christian also sheds tears of sympathy, like some of those who accompanied the widow from the city.

But Christian grief at times like this is much different from that of the children of this world. The unbelieving wail and howl because they have no hope. They blame God for taking their loved one who, they say, was such a "good" person. The **"large crowd"** that was following the widow to the cemetery surely must have thought very highly of both the widow and her son. But Death which rules by sin, doesn't respect the "good" we may see in others, because they are sinners too and fall under the same condemnation as others!

No! Death must be forced to give way by Him Who alone is "good and perfect," that greater power – **The LORD of Life.** The miracle of our text is a wonderful reminder of what happens when the Lord of Life

meets the Prince of Death! Jesus **"came near the gate of the city"** at the time He chose. The gate of the city of Nain was a narrow passageway from the city to the cemetery. Death with all its power could not pass through that narrow gate without meeting **The LORD of Life**. The Savior of sinners stood in Death's way! This is a powerful picture to treasure in our hearts and minds! Jesus is ready to wipe away the tears of our Christian sorrow in the face of death. He does this by many assurances from His Word.

When we grieve He assures us in 1Corinthians 15 that He has removed the **"sting of Death."** Luther wrote: "What is our death but a night's sleep? For as through sleep all the weariness and faintness pass away. . . . so that in the morning we rise, fresh and strong and joyous, so also at the Last Day we shall rise again as if we had only slept a night, and shall be fresh and strong."

In Luke 8:51, Jesus promises that at the very moment of death the Christian is on his way to heaven. For He said: **"Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death."** – Like the little girl who was walking through the cemetery when it was almost dark. When someone asked her whether she was afraid, she said: "Oh no. I only cross the cemetery to get home."

Jesus also tells us that the bodies of believers shall rise to eternal life just as easily as the young man of Nain was brought back to life with his mother. What the Prince of Life did that day shall be repeated on the Last Day. For in that day we are told in John 5:28: "all who are in the graves shall hear His voice."

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He called out his name: "Lazarus, come forth!" If he had only said: "come forth," the whole graveyard in Bethany would have come forth from the dead at that moment! For the same reason, when the funeral procession came out of the city of Nain, Jesus did not cry out, "Come forth!" Instead He came close and spoke directly to the young man: "I say to YOU, arise!" If death can hold one, it can hold billions! But if one must arise at the command of Jesus Christ, then billions must arise just as easily as the one! The power over Death in the case of this young man is a guarantee to us of Christ's power to raise ALL the dead!

In Philippians 1:21 we are assured that the bodies of believers shall

be changed and glorified like the body of our risen Savior, the Prince of Life! If this is hard for you to believe, then why do you plant those ugly seeds every year, which die and then produce the most glorious flowers?

Or how can you explain how a caterpillar emerges from a cocoon in the form of a beautiful butterfly? If God does such things to delight mankind in this sinful world, how can we doubt His power and His promise to give His believing children new and glorious bodies in the resurrection?

In Revelation 21 the Lord of Life tells us that once in heaven, **“God shall wipe away every tear from” our “eyes;” and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain”**

So, we have been reminded again that the Lord of Life is ready to wipe away the tears of every penitent, believing sinner. You need never be sorry or ashamed of the tears of true repentance when you have sinned or when death enters your home. When sin and the Prince of Death come let us say: **“O God, be merciful to me, the sinner!”** Our God will show us mercy because He sent the LORD of Life to meet and beat the Prince of Death! Amen.