

Mothering Sunday 2023

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Date: 19 March 2023

Preacher: Andy Meadows

- [0 : 0 0] The reading is from Luke chapter 7, verses 11 to 17, and you can find that on page 1040.
- Soon afterwards, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out.
- The only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said to her, Do not weep.
- Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still, and he said, Young man, I say to you, arise.
- And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet has arisen among us, and God has visited his people.
- [1 : 1 8] And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country. Great. Well, we're going to be thinking about that story this morning.
- And I want you to talk to someone next to you. And here's your question. What makes you cry? What makes you cry? Now, for someone, if you don't cry, what are you on about?
- If you say that, then what makes you sad? Okay, what makes you sad? What makes you cry? Okay? 30 seconds. Off you go. I'm not going to get everyone to shout out the things that make them cry.
- But I guess, well, we all know about tears, don't we? As babies, before we had words, we cried to let others know that we were tired, hungry, uncomfortable.
- And as we grow older, we cry for other reasons, don't we? So maybe when we're cutting onions, we cry. Or maybe you're doing a barbecue and the smoke gets in your eyes and you start crying.
- [2 : 3 1] Maybe there's pollen in the air and it makes you cry. Or maybe when we have a cold, it makes us cry. Our eyes feel watering, irritated. Well, can you think of other reasons we cry?
- Other reasons we cry? Well, when we hurt ourselves, when we are sad or hurt or angry, we cry for different reasons, don't we?
- Well, today's true story from the Bible starts with tears. It starts with tears. And put your finger on the number 11. And we're going to read again the number 11 from the Bible.
- And let me read it. Soon afterward, he, that's Jesus, went to a town called Nain. And his disciples and a great crowd went with him.
- As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother. And she was a widow.
- [3 : 3 8] And a considerable crowd from the town was with her. So we have Jesus. Jesus is with his crowd of disciples.

He's walking along. He's been doing amazing things. He's just healed someone of their sickness. And everyone's following Jesus, seeing what he's going to do next. And Jesus, with his crowd, meets another large crowd.

But this is a sad crowd because this is a funeral. Funerals are a way of, they're always sad, aren't they? Saying goodbye to people who die.

And this funeral is extra sad. But the man who had died was the only son of his mother. And she was a widow. A widow is a woman whose husband had died.

And so when this woman's husband died, she would have relied on her son to provide for her, to look after her. But now that he has died, she is alone.

[4 : 42] She is a widow. She's helpless. And she's very, very sad. Well, how was Jesus feeling when he saw this large funeral taking place?

We'll have a look at little 13, sentence 13. Jesus came up to the woman and he said, stop crying.

Now, he doesn't say that because it's wrong to cry when we're sad. Jesus himself cried when his friend Lazarus died. But we're told Jesus had compassion on her.

Now, compassion is a big word that means we feel another person's pain and sadness. And that tells us something really great about Jesus.

He doesn't just look on from a distance. He doesn't just see us as numbers on a page. He has compassion on those who are really sad.

[5 : 54] He could have just saw this funeral and walked past, but he didn't. He stopped. Now, Mother's Day is a very happy day where we say thank you to God for our mum.

So, Mother's Day is also hard, isn't it? We think of mothers who have died, those who don't have a good relationship with their mother, and those who would love to be mothers but aren't.

And at many times, when something bad happens, when we feel alone, helpless, and very, very sad, we think nobody understands, and we think, where is God?

And the truth is, from this story, he is there. He understands, and he is filled with love and compassion for us.

That's a wonderful thing to know about Jesus. His compassion. But then Jesus says something that seems a bit out of place at a funeral.

[6 : 55] Look again at the little 13. He said to her, Do not weep. Don't cry. Maybe you've seen people coming out of church, and probably from a funeral as you're walking down the street.

Maybe you've been to a funeral recently. I don't think anyone in the room would ever dream of saying to someone, Stop crying. If you went into a Clinton card, are they still going?

A card shop? A card factory? And you bought one of those sympathy cards for someone who's going through a sad time, you won't find a card that says, Stop crying.

You won't find one. Crying is a right reaction to when we are sad. And yet Jesus says, Stop crying. And so if he's not got the power to do anything about this, then that is an incredibly cruel thing to say.

It's a horrible thing to say. But after Jesus' compassion, we see his control. Compassion and control.

[8 : 04] That Jesus has complete power over death. Look at little 14. Then he came up and touched the bear.

That's the stretcher that the body was on. And the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say to you, arise. I wonder if you can just picture the scene.

That you are there. If you're one of Jesus' followers or one of the crowd at the funeral. It's a very sad time. And Jesus, people are crying.

Jesus comes up to the man. He touches the bear. And there's silence. What is he going to do? And then he speaks. Young man, I say to you, arise.

And everyone's looking. Everyone's waiting. And then you hear the faint boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Then you hear the... His lungs fill with breath.

[9 : 10] His brain starts whirring. His eyes open. And then, verse 15, the dead man sat up and began to speak.

And Jesus gave him to his mother. There he is, look. Can you imagine it? I wonder what he said. Do you wonder what he said? He began to speak. He said, hey, why are all these people here?

Why am I wrapped up in this cloth? Why am I on a plank of wood, mum? Silence then turns to laughter. And then there's a big shout of yes!

The crowd cheer. And before you know it, everyone is going bananas. This is an amazing scene. Jesus just uses words. There's no CPR.

There's no counting down, staying alive. There's no defibrillator. Just uses words. You see, when Jesus commands life to come, life comes.

[10 : 08] When Jesus commands death to leave, death leaves. What does this show us about Jesus? He is Lord.

That's how Luke describes Jesus in verse 13. In fact, it's the first time in Luke's gospel that Luke describes Jesus as Lord. Look at verse 13. And when the Lord saw her.

Lord just simply means boss. That he is in charge, in control over everything. Now we, there are different people who are in charge over us.

Point to your mum and dad. If you're a child here, point to your mum and dad. They're in charge. They decide when you go to bed. Then we have teachers.

Here's my English dictionary. My teachers. They're in charge of you at school. They decide what work you do. What lessons you do. They can punish bad behaviour and reward good behaviour with lots and lots of stickers.

[11 : 12] And then you have the police and the government. They tell us what we can and can't do. And they're around. They are in charge. But none of these come close to Jesus.

Because none of these have power over the grave. None of these people are in charge over death. But Jesus is. He has the power. He is in complete control.

Compassion and control of Jesus we see in this story. Now think back to September and the Queen's funeral. Maybe you were there.

Maybe you watched it on TV. It was called Operation London Bridge. I guess maybe like me. It was actually quite hard to imagine that day would ever come.

She'd been ruling for 60 years. Is that right? 70? 70 years. 70 years. So long. So, so long.

[12 : 17] Maybe it's hard. But maybe this is actually quite hard for us to imagine for ourselves. Because one day our own personal Operation London Bridge will be activated.

Maybe you even have your own code name. I don't know. But yet as we come face to face with Jesus. We come face to face with the one who cares for us deeply.

Who has compassion. And the one who has the power to deal with it. The power to get us through it. We see the compassion of Jesus.

We see the control of Jesus. And we're going to think more about what that means for us later on. So we thought about our story.

That Jesus. Both the compassion. He saw a woman in need. Helpless. Desperate. He had compassion.

[13 : 23] His heart went out to her. And we saw his control. That he has power over death. Now again.

I'm going to get you to talk to the person next to you. We're going to come back to the theme of tears. If you could get rid of something in the world. What would you get rid of? If you get rid of something in the world.

Just one thing. One thing you get rid of. What would it be? 30 seconds. I wonder what you said.

Maybe a particular lesson at school. Get rid of maths. Maybe a particular food. Get rid of broccoli. Or chocolate. Or something like that. I met someone the other day.

Who just doesn't like chocolate. It's mad. But anyway. Get rid of chocolate. Get rid of lots of different things. Maybe a sport. Get rid of football. Make life so much simpler. Wouldn't it?

[14 : 20] Get rid of football. But do you know what I'd get rid of? This is a bit cheating. Tears. I'd get rid of tears. Wouldn't we all?

Wouldn't we all? There was no longer any crying. Nothing bad would ever happen in the world. And Jesus did this for the mother in our story.

He got rid of her tears. Well remember? A boy being carried out. Young man. He saw her funeral. He saw her. He said, don't cry. He touched a beer.

He said, young man arise. And he did. Imagine her tears of sadness. He said, probably tears of joy. I'm going to go out on a limb and say that all of us long for a world where there are no tears.

Where countries don't fight each other. Where people don't get sick and die. When actually we don't need tissues anymore. All our houses are full of tissues. Every room we've got tissues.

[15 : 25] It would be amazing if we don't need tissues anymore. That they Kleenex go out of business. But our world is not like that. Bad things happen in our world. We know that.

We see that on the news all the time. But this miracle of Jesus. It shows us what Jesus has come to do. He has come to solve this big problem.

He has come to deal with this problem of tears. Because that's how the people reacted after Jesus raised the young man to life. Look at verse 16.

Fear seized them all. And they glorified God saying, a great prophet has arisen among us.

And God has visited his people. And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and the surrounding country. What did they do, the people?

[16 : 24] They glorified God. They praised God. And what did they say? God has visited his people. Jesus is God.

The true God who has compassion and control over everything. He stepped down from earth to heaven. What? He stepped down to earth from heaven.

And Jesus' miracles aren't just him showing off, going, hey, look what I can do. But they show us why Jesus came to earth.

Jesus came to earth to bring in God's new world without any tears. I wonder if you like jigsaw.

This jigsaw is about my level. It's great. And you start and it's all a mess. It's all a chaos. And there's little pieces of jigsaw.

[17 : 19] Little pieces. And you start putting them together, don't you? And to make a big picture. So you find a piece on its own of a toucan? Pelican?

Toucan. Toucan. And then you think, what is that about? And then you see, oh, it connects to this one with some snakes, bizarrely. Some snakes. And then you see, and you put them all together, and you see the big picture of all these animals that really shouldn't be in a tree but are.

The really big picture. Well, Jesus' miracles are like little pieces of jigsaw. When he came, and you start piecing them together, we see the big picture.

We see the big picture of God's new world to come. A remade world. A world without death, disease, and danger. Jesus shows us what this future new world will be like.

Let me put it another way. Hands up if you like watching films. Hands up if you like going to the cinema to watch films. Adverts. Great. And you're there, and with your popcorn.

[18 : 32] And what comes on before the film when you go to the cinema? Adverts. And then you get some trailers, and you're sitting there, you're munching on your popcorn.

You're watching the trailers, aren't you? Now, what is a trailer? Actually, it's a bit chewy, that. What is a trailer? A trailer is like an advert for a film.

It's pieces of the film put together to show you what the film would be like. To say, hey, come and watch this film. Look how epic it is.

That's what a trailer is meant to do. Well, when Jesus came to earth, he did lots of miracles, and they are like the trailer. They are the trailer of the film entitled God's New World.

He shows us the future, the main event to come. That is why Jesus raising a young man from death to life 2,000 years ago is good news for us today, 2023 in London.

[19 : 35] And the right response is to do exactly what the people did, to praise God, and to recognise in Jesus, God has visited his people.

God has stepped down onto earth. Jesus has come to bring in God's new perfect world. A world with no more tears.

No more tissues. They're gone. We don't need them anymore. And Jesus shows us he's got the power to do it. He has power over the weather, over sickness and death.

And not only has Jesus a power over death in other people, but he defeated death himself. And we'll think about that in a few weeks' time in Easter.

He defeated death himself so all our sin can be forgiven. And that we can be with him in this perfect new world to come. Adults, let me be upfront.

[20 : 41] What do you make of Jesus? What do you make of Jesus? We have looked at one incident in the life of Jesus. What do you make of that? What do you make of him?

Now some might say, this thing just doesn't happen. Raising someone from death. And I want to say, yeah, it doesn't happen. Look how excited the people were. There's only three resurrections in the whole Old Testament.

It doesn't happen all the time. And Luke was writing this, and he was a doctor. He's not stupid. He knows dead people don't come back to life.

He's not an idiot. Of course these things don't happen, which is why they're so extraordinary. It shows us that Jesus is extraordinary. He is God.

And the right response to Jesus is to recognise that he is Lord. He has control and I am not. I do not. He is Lord and I am not.

[21 : 39] He is Lord and I am not. And turn from living my own way to live his way. Confessing my sin. Saying sorry for my sin. Saying Jesus forgive me.

So we can be with him in that brand new world to come. And that we glorify him and not ourselves. So God has visited his people.

He will bring in God's new world for all those who turn from our sin. One day our own personal Operation London Bridge will be activated.

But in Jesus God has activated Operation No More Tears. He will take all those who trust in him to God's perfect new world to come.

Let me close for these words right at the end of the Bible. Talking about God's new world of God coming to live with his people. It says this.

[22 : 39] He, that's God, will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain. For the old order of things has passed away.

You can imagine the mother in our story wiping away the tears in her eyes when she got her son back. What a Mother's Day for her. When God brings in this new world, it's like he gets out the tissue.

He wipes our eyes. No more sadness. No more tears. That is something to look forward to and to thank God for. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we praise you for the compassion and control of Jesus.

That he knows when we are sad and feeling alone. He knows what that is like. And he has the power over everything.

Even over death. And that by trusting in him, we can be in his perfect new world to come with no more tears. Please help us to give thanks for that every day.

[23 : 49] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.