

Christ's Management of Our Grief

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[0 : 00] Turn with me now, please, to Luke chapter 7. I'm going to look this morning at verses 7, sorry, verses 11 through to 17, where we find this incident of the Lord meeting with this bereaved widow who was on the way to bury her recently, her son who had recently died.

We can give our study this morning the title of Christ's Management of Our Grief.

It's one of the most positive and precious features of the Lord's ministry and indeed of the Lord's person and ministry to ourselves as well as what you find described of his ministry in the Gospels.

The fact that he manages our grief as he does. Grief and sorrow are so common in our lives as human beings that the Bible itself concludes in its description of heaven as a description that tells us that grief plays no further part in our experience.

You remember how the book of Revelation in chapter 21 and verse 4 describes heaven as where God will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more.

[1 : 35] Neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away. In other words, it's really describing for us the former things as a span of grief and pain and sorrow much of the time and how heaven is the place where all of that is no longer a feature in the experience of those who will come to be blessed there.

But before we ever come to enter heaven, we have the benefit of Christ's management of our grief on the way through life.

We don't have to wait until we get to heaven to realize and to know how Jesus manages our grief. And it's not just simply a removal of it at last from our experience, it's how he manages us even so that it will ultimately benefit us in knowing his ministry to us in our griefs and sorrows, even on the way through life and onward to eternity.

Christ's management of our grief. Pretty much all of us here today, I'm sure, have experienced grief or are experiencing grief even now.

We all know people today who are grieving, who are mourning the passing of loved ones from their families and from their relationships. We know a world that is filled with grief, a world that is so largely marked with sorrow as a consequence of all the violence, the warfare, the grief of refugeeship, of being alienated, and outcast, the grief of living on the streets, the grief of deprivation and poverty.

[3 : 34] Different kinds of grief, but hurt nevertheless, along with bereavement. So how does Christ manage our grief?

How does Christ manage our sorrows and our hurts? Well, here's one passage where this is very prominent, and we're looking at three things in relation to that. First of all, Christ confronts our human grief.

Secondly, Christ has compassion to the grieving. And thirdly, Christ conquered the cause of grief, as you can see from this passage itself.

Firstly, he confronts our human grief. Afterwards, he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. And 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.

He met a woman of sorrows. He met a woman who was sorrowing because she had lost her husband, and now she had lost her only son. She met a woman who knew what grief was in her life prior to this, but who now had added to the grief she previously had the grief of losing her only son.

[4 : 49] And you know, widows were very vulnerable in that society, and in some societies still. All the way through the Old Testament, you find an injunction given to kings and to those in authority to make sure to look after the poor.

And widows were generally poor because they didn't have the facilities that you now associated with social welfare. And unless people in their own community or in their own families looked after them, then they were simply poor and left to get on with it themselves.

And here is this woman. Not only is she a widow and therefore very vulnerable in that sense, but the one person that was left to her in the world that might be a great resource and would have been a great resource of at least providing some measure of income or security for her, is now dead.

Her young son. He was a young man. Not sure what age he was, but verse 14, you can see how Jesus addressed him. Young man, I say to you, arise.

So he wasn't very well advanced in years, and yet he died. Sometimes it happens. Death doesn't just claim old people, old men and old women.

[6 : 10] We know very well that death comes to the young as well. Grief comes to take away, or death comes to take away the young from our midst over whom we grieve.

And of course, as she faced this situation in her life, she little expected that day to meet with Jesus confronting her grief, confronting her situation.

And that's why you find here that in the Gospel of Luke, in fact, women are given a very prominent place. Women in that society tended to be largely exploited.

exploited. They were not actually given much of a position, and they were very easily exploited all the way through the days of Jesus' time on earth. But Luke, as you read through the Gospel of Luke, one of the things that strikes you is how frequently he mentions the place that Jesus gave to women in his dealings with people, the place that they had among his disciples, the place that they had around the time of his death and his crucifixion, not just Mary, his mother, but others along with them.

So Luke wants to really say to us in this Gospel that he has on account of the ministry of Jesus, that as far as Jesus was concerned, women mattered. They weren't objects to be cast aside.

[7 : 39] They weren't there to be exploited. They weren't there to be looked down on and thought of as next to useless, which is how society then largely looked at them. They were valuable people to him as much as men were.

And of course, that also tells us that the Bible is not responsible for the mistreatment of women.

Sometimes you come across that view, that the Bible really is the great damaging book that has damaged human relationships, damaged our views of what gender is, what human society should be like, what we are in relationships one to the other.

If we're not living by the terms of the Bible, it's not the Bible's fault. If human beings are not as they should be to one another, if women are looked down on and downtrodden, it's not the fault of the Bible because that's not what you find there.

And it's certainly not what you find there in the teachings and in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Nowhere do you find women looked upon with such regard and such interest and such pity and such love and such intention to treat them with the respect that they ought to have as in the ministry of Jesus.

[9 : 06] So here is a woman of sorrows and she meets this Jesus who's called in the Bible, of course, a man of sorrows. Going back to that great chapter in Isaiah chapter 53, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief and the sorrows of course there are associated with his bearing our sins and taking to himself all our sorrows and that's one of the great features of his life.

He took to himself all our sorrows. He didn't just take some of them, he took all of them and as we'll see in a minute, he took the very root of our sorrows in our sin to himself as well.

So that's this woman where Jesus confronts human grief and the fact that he took our sorrows to himself is part of what qualifies him to manage our sorrows as he does.

Hebrews chapter 2 where you find an account of Jesus in the way that he took our human nature to himself and the reason and purpose for it. Hebrews chapter 2 and verses 17 to 18 puts it this way.

Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers that of course means sisters, females as well. He had to be made like us human beings in every respect so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God to make propitiation for the sins of the people for because he himself has suffered when tempted he is able to help those who are being tempted.

[10 : 41] Where do you take your sorrows? Where do you find someone who will actually manage your sorrows properly and adequately and beneficially for yourself only in Jesus?

He's the only one who can do that. He's the only one who has confronted our human grief successfully and powerfully in a way that actually manages it and manages it to our benefit.

today our grieving hearts above everything else yes we need human companionship we need human support we need fellowship we need worship we need all of that context but above all of that we need this Jesus.

We need this understanding we need this compassion we need this management of our grief by him. Secondly look at Christ's compassion to the grieving.

here is this widow here she is in this situation with this deep need that she now has the vulnerability that she has when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her and said to her now that's really interesting when the Lord saw her she didn't run towards him she would have been as the custom then was at the front of the procession with the rest following on behind bearing the bear in the coffin what you would call the coffin in our situation anyway she would have been heading up the procession she would have been the first person that Jesus met as he met that funeral procession but you don't find that she ran to him and appealed to him she didn't come to him and say to him Lord please help me can you not do something for me when he saw her he had compassion as soon as he set his eyes upon that cortege and on this poor widow woman going to bury her son his compassion was roused when he saw her he had compassion on her and that tells you a great deal about Jesus it tells you a great deal about the kind of person he is it's not that he needs to be provoked into considering our grief and confronting our grief and having compassion for us in our grief when we're grieving it comes from himself as he sees and it's a feature of the bible that that is in fact what God is like you go back to the old testament go back to

[13 : 13] Israel and Egypt and the bondage of Egypt and the description that you have of them in the slavery and in the abuse with which you were abused by the Egyptians for all of these years and what do you read about God that God when he looked upon them pitied them when he saw them as he saw them as I picked them out in these circumstances of suffering and of brutality in Egypt he pitied them that wasn't because they appealed to him to come to their help they didn't do that he saw them he had pity and compassion on them Hosea chapter 11 verse 8 says the same thing there's the people of God and they've gone away from God and they're steeped in idolatry and he has sent to them the likes of Hosea to prophesy to urge them to come back to God to repent of their sin to come and again know God as their

God and God is prophesying judgment rightly righteous judgment a judgment they deserve and in Hosea chapter 11 and verse 8 he says how can I do this to you I'm not going to exercise my fierce anger for I am God my compassions are stirred within me my compassion my heart is stirred within me and in the feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew and especially in Mark's account of it you find this word used of Jesus when he saw the multitude he saw them following him he saw them looking for health physically as much as spiritually in fact more so at the time they were hungry they were in need physically when he saw them this is the vision he had this is how he saw them and if only we could just capture this for ourselves as we see people in their spiritual need how did he see them how does that passage describe how Jesus saw that vast multitude he saw them as sheep without a shepherd he saw them in need of being gathered together of being cared for and what does it say he saw them as sheep without a shepherd when he saw them he had compassion on them the very sight of them drew out his compassion drew out his pity towards them my friends this is not the

God of the atheists this is not the God the atheists love to describe as a God who is cruel and a God who doesn't care for people and a God who allows things in the world to happen yes things happen in the world most of them by human creation but I don't know anything of this God in the Bible who is a cruel God an uncompassionate God a God who isn't stirred by seeing people in their plight in their misery the God I see in the Bible as I see him especially in Jesus Christ and as you see him from this as a God whose pity is drawn out by the very sight of people in their need do we associate this God with being uncaring do we associate this God with not being interested in that and just being concerned only to look away when he saw her he had compassion on her when he saw her the moment he saw her the sight of what he actually set his eyes on moved him deeply because this word compassion is a word that's not a surface type of word we've come across it already in other passages it's not a word that shows something on the surface of the heart it's not something that describes anything other than a very deep movement of the soul of

Jesus of the heart of Jesus you know the same word is used further on in Luke's gospel in chapter 15 to do with the prodigal and this is important of course too that he came to himself before he came back to the father and when he was on his way back to the father you then read about his father and his father saw him at a great distance still just on the horizon you might say making his way probably slowly perhaps towards his own home that he had left many years before and the description of his father is absolutely that's the same word that's used here of Jesus looking at this woman the father had pity for this returning prodigal son in all the misery and smell of his past existence still attached to him but he ran towards him with compassion and you remember that

Luke chapter 15 the figure of the father does not represent God the father but Jesus the parable is given after the complaint about Jesus by the scribes and the Pharisees this man this Jesus this man receives sinners and eats with them he takes sinners into his company he has compassion on sinners he goes into fellowship with them that's why Jesus told these parables the parable of the prodigal returning is of souls returning to Jesus the compassionate savior whose compassion today is unparalleled if you're here today and you're not yet saved don't imagine that Jesus is not compassionate toward you and if you do find at last and I hope it doesn't happen to you that you enter a lost eternity one of the worst things about that eternity for those who have known the gospel is that the

[19 : 40] Jesus you refused and the Jesus you refused to come to is a compassionate savior that you refused to respond to the compassion of Christ when he saw her he had compassion on her his compassion to the grieving and in all our grief and in all our sorrows nothing is more valuable to us than the compassion of Jesus when you bring your grief to this Jesus that's who you're bringing it to you're bringing it to one who has compassion before you ever go to him you don't have to ask him to be compassionate he is compassionate you don't have to appeal to him to begin to be compassionate to you he's compassionate as he sees you in your grief and his compassion is drawn out towards you as it is with no other how thankful we should be today that our gathering here to worship this Jesus is to worship the one whose compassion is so great who is himself instantly moved in compassion in seeing the plight of human beings it's not his fault if we don't take advantage of his compassion it's not his fault if people die in their sins and refuse to accept

Christ as their savior it's not his fault if people choose another religion rather than coming to the one that has a compassionate savior as the very substance of it when he saw her he had compassion his heart was moved his soul was stirred towards this poor woman so Jesus confronts our human grief and Jesus in his compassion to the grieving is such a wonderful wonderful savior in that regard itself and thirdly Christ conquered the cause of our grief of her grief now of course the root cause of her grief is the death of her son but when you look at it theologically what this is really saying to us is that the root cause as you take other passages of the bible such as romans 5 verse 12 the root cause of our grief here is death but the root cause of our death of course is sin death passed upon all human beings for all sin death came through the disobedience of one man

Adam and death passed upon us all so the root cause of our death is sin and death is the root cause therefore too of our grief and the first thing he said to her was do not weep it might sound strange and it would be strange if you didn't know anything of what follows and when Jesus says do not weep he's not saying grief is not important grief is not relevant he's not saying you're not allowed to grieve and if you're a Christian you shouldn't be grieving it's not like that at all Jesus will have us to grieve and grief is something that is proper to a situation of bereavement but of course when he's saying do not weep he's saying that because he knows what's going to follow immediately what he's saying is don't weep because I'm going to overcome your grief and the cause of it I'm not only just confronting your grief and your sorrow I'm going to conquer the cause of your grief

I'm going to deal with death and I'm going to deal with death in a way that overcomes it and conquers it and that's brought out in what you find here and of course we have to go to his own death and his own resurrection as the means by which death was overcome for us it's not without reason that you find Mary Magdalene in John's gospel after the resurrection of Jesus that Jesus spoke to her woman why are you weeping because that is keyed into the fact that he's now risen from the dead she then doesn't understand that of course she hasn't realized that yet she hasn't come to know that risen Jesus but what he's saying to her is you've no cause of weeping left because I've overcome death I've risen from the dead woman why are you weeping and you can actually bring that really into the passage here as well when you know what's going on do not weep and then he came and touched the beer and the bearer stood still you weren't allowed to do that as a

Jew in those times because you would contract a certain ceremonial defilement to yourself you're contracting a certain ceremonial defilement to yourself and yet here he comes and he touches the beer he does the same with lepers on other occasions something you were not ordinarily supposed to do but this is Jesus and the touch of Jesus is not like the touch of anyone else the touch of Jesus is the touch that reverses death that reverses defilement and uncleanness and then he says young man I say to you arise just imagine they're carrying him towards his funeral there's the corpse there it is on the bear as he's being carried along just as you see it with ourselves and they stop when they meet when Jesus meets them and deals with them in this way and this is then what he says just like he said to the grave to the sepulcher in which the body of

[25 : 36] Lazarus had been laid now he's saying to this dead corpse young man and the dead man sat up and began to speak when he says I say to you arise again Luke is emphasizing the power of Christ's word the creative word of Jesus you see it's in the previous passage because they all flow together really logically as well the previous passage this centurion had heard about Jesus he sent some people to him and then when Jesus went with them the centurion sent his friends and said Lord don't trouble yourself I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof therefore I didn't presume you to come but say the word and my servant will be healed for

I too am a man under authority and you see why Jesus was so why he marveled at him when this man had such an understanding this centurion who could command someone to go somewhere and he would go or to come to him and he would come and to one other to do this and he would do it there's the word of the centurion it's been complied with there's an instant response to it and Jesus finds in that something that's very illustrative of himself and this man understood that Jesus had the type of word much more than even his own word the centurion's word Jesus had the type of word that changed situations instantly just speak the word he said and my servant will be healed and he came to this woman in all her grief and her sorrow and he said don't weep and he said young man I say to you arise and he instantly arose there was an instant response a proof of the power of the word of

Christ I know this nowadays would sometimes be dismissed as just been rather fanciful and an invention of the early church that these miracles like this are recorded for us in the scripture and people will say to us who don't accept the Bible you have no proof of that how can you actually prove that such a thing happened well just think about it Luke the gospel of Luke was written around about 63 or 65 AD which is let's say about 40 to 50 years after the death of Jesus people would still be alive who had known Jesus who had seen something of his ministry who had actually been part of these events it would be easy enough to go to these people if you were coming into the district and saying look I'm really looking into what the ministry of Jesus was like I'm very skeptical about all of this do you have any first hand knowledge of it can you for example tell me anything that happened in Nain and somebody would come forward and isn't a fancy fable this is the real thing this is the real

Jesus the real word that changes lives that transforms situations that's able to do that for you and for me as surely as he did here and then he does something very wonderful not only did the young dead man arise having been brought back to life and he began to speak that showed this was a very real coming back to life and Jesus gave him to his mother that is quite outstandingly beautiful his mother had lost him to death and Jesus had come and reached into the clutches of death and brought her son back from the dead and gave him back to her that's what he's like he doesn't do things so as to leave out the practicalities of it he wants to give the son back to his mother he wants to restore the son in this widow's home so that she will have something to live by so he gave him back to his mother and that too is an illustration of how

Jesus overcomes and conquers the cause of our grief the death that's come upon all of us for our sin what does he do by his death and by his resurrection from the dead what is he doing in that he's going into death on our behalf he's reaching into death into the very heart of death if you like and he's rescuing us from its clutches and he's restoring us if you can imagine it something like this when God the father sent him into this world he sent him into this world to die and to rise again from the dead this commandment he said I have received from my father and you can just make a picture of it as Jesus goes back to the father and says I have done it I have finished the work you gave me to do and now I'm giving back to you all those who are in the clutches and custody of death and

[31 : 33] I've set them free and I've brought them back to you he gave him back to his mother he defeats death he has defeated death it's conquered it no longer rules over the Lord's people he brought life and immortality to light as 2nd Timothy puts it through the gospel as it now pronounces this for us this gospel this good news you could look at it in terms of it being a release warrant or at least that it tells us about a release warrant a release warrant is something that's signed by someone in authority like a judge so that somebody who is in prison that needs to be released will actually be lawfully released from custody that release warrant is signed it's taken to the place where the person is held captive and the release warrant verifies the fact that that person should go free that's what the gospel announces

God has produced a release warrant in Jesus Christ and he has signed it himself and you know when you come to repent of your sin to believe and trust in Christ what you're doing is effectively thanking God for the release warrant that he's given you which you have to come and sign for yourself so that you receive it and take it and make it yours he has defeated death he has dealt with the cause of our death our sin his management of our grief extends right through to the spiritual dimensions of our plight and today unless Christ is managing our grief what do we have who's looking after us how will we die what will our eternity be like it won't be a release warrant there will be a death warrant if we don't accept him for all that he is the glorious compassionate powerful saviour let's pray lord our god we thank you that you are the almighty one who girds your sword upon your thigh who comes to reach into our lives so to rescue us from death we thank you that you have done so through your own death and resurrection and that you offer to us in the gospel that glorious victory that we may come and share in it and receive it for ourselves bless your word to us again we pray today and bless this day to us with all its advantage and privilege for

Jesus sake Amen let's conclude our service this morning singing in psalm 103 that's on page 135 psalm 103 the tune as Walton we're singing verses 8 to 14 the Lord is merciful and kind to anger slow and full of grace he will not constantly reprove or in his anger hide his face verses 8 to 14 to the tune Walton will stand to sing these final verses the Lord is merciful and kind to anger slow and full of grace he will not constantly reprove for in his thunder by his face he does not punish our mischief forgive our sins their just reward our greatest love love as high as men to war all those who fear the

Lord as far as he sits from the west so far his love has borne away how many sins and trespasses and all the guilt that on us may just as a father loves his child so God and souls to fear his name for he remembers we are just and well he knows our feeble frame

I'll go to the side door this morning now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always Amen as as to Him as as as as as as as as as as