

• *The first of three dead people raised to life*

1. The miracle is a striking instance of the sovereignty of God

• *This miracle was not done because somebody asked for it but just because Jesus wanted to do it!*

2. When God acts in sovereign freedom it is always a display of His mercy

• *A glimpse of what revival is like*

• *God is the God of resurrection*

There are three occasions mentioned in the Gospels when Jesus raises someone from the dead. This one is the first. The other two are the raising of Jairus' daughter and the raising of Lazarus.

1. **The miracle is a striking instance of the sovereignty of God.** Sometimes God may act in an amazing way just because He wants to and for His own reasons. This miracle was not done because a needy person asked for it ^{¶1}. Sometimes a miracle takes place because someone other than the needy person asks for it ^{¶2}. But this miracle took place just because Jesus wanted it to. No one else had the slightest idea it would take place. Here is a person who is totally unknown to Jesus. There is no reason to think that the widow of this story was previously known to Jesus. Soon after the previous miracle Jesus was visiting a city called Nain about twenty-five miles south of Capernaum ^{¶3}. As He is entering the city He passes a funeral procession ^{¶4}. A few questions reveal that a young man has died; he is the only son of a widow ^{¶5}. Jesus is full of compassion for the weeping mother. He touches the stretcher on which the body is laid, covered (one imagines) by a cloth ^{¶6} and calls the young man back to life ^{¶7}. The people are stunned with fear and amazement and instantly hail Jesus as a great prophet and proclaim that a special visitation from God is to be recognised in Jesus ^{¶8}. The news of the event rapidly spreads throughout the 'land of the Jews'¹ and even beyond ^{¶9}. It is one of Jesus' greatest miracles. The woman did not ask for the miracle. As far as we know she was not exercising any special faith. It was entirely the compassion of Jesus that led to His acting as He did. He acted in the power of His own faith.

2. **When God acts in sovereign freedom it is always a display of His mercy.** God is free to do what He likes, but what He likes is mercy! The miracle-stories of Jesus are always (amongst other things) acted parables. They are literal events; they are samples of what Jesus can do, and samples of what He might do for us. They are attestations of His amazing faith in His Father. They are foretastes of final glory. But in addition to all of these things, miracles are acted parables. They are 'signs' (to use a favourite word of John).

For example, our story gives us a glimpse of the kind of thing God does when He revives the Church. Revival is a powerful, sovereign act of God in which He restores His Church to life and makes it sit up and start speaking for Him. The kind of thing that happened to this young man is a perfect picture of what happens to the Church. Sometimes the Church seems to die. In one area or another it gets weak and sickly and stops speaking for God. But our God is the God of resurrection! Just when the Church seems finally to have died and people are talking about conducting the funeral, God steps in and His Church is raised from spiritual death and starts talking and praising God!

¶1 as in 5:12
 ¶2 as in 7:1-10
 ¶3 7:11
 ¶4 7:12
 ¶5 7:13
 ¶6 7:14
 ¶7 7:14-15
 ¶8 7:16
 ¶9 7:17

• Also a parable of conversion

Also, our story is a parable of conversion. The whole human race is like a funeral procession! The wages of sin is death, and every man and woman is proceeding down the road to a funeral – its own. It is a picture that can be applied to the human race as a whole. It moves down the road of life. The whole business is an unhappy affair. There is much pain and sorrow. And at the end of it all there is a funeral and a graveyard. But suddenly – as in our story – there is an interruption. Someone intervenes. Someone – Jesus the Son of God – is deeply distressed at the sorrow that this ugly thing called death brings into the lives of men and women. He calls the whole procession to a halt. With a touch and a word He reverses the pathway to the graveyard. It is exactly what He does in the story of the whole human race. He stepped into our situation. He came into this world to stop a procession of the entire human race to the graveyard. He holds up the entire human race as it parades down the road to doom and death and destruction. He intervenes in the lives of people who are dead in trespasses and sins. When they are in ruin and hopelessness, He reverses what has happened in their lives and gives them the life of God in their lives. He gives them spiritual vitality and the experience of sensitivity towards God. He stops the funeral, and holds it up while He raises someone from the dead. This is analogous to what God did when He saved me, and when He saves you. He stops the funeral, and brings us back to life!

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3. The greatest display of power is seen when death is reversed

3. **The greatest display of power is seen when death is reversed.** The greatest power there is in this world, other than God Himself, is the power of death. But Jesus' almighty power can reverse even death itself. In a matter of a few seconds a lifeless corpse becomes a living person. What Jesus did to the widow's son He can do in countless calamitous situations. He speaks and the dead are raised. His word is accompanied by His power. When the mighty voice of Jesus speaks, death itself is banished.

Note

1. As elsewhere in Luke, the word for 'Judea' seems to mean 'the land where Jews are to be found'.

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