

Series: Luke
Text: Luke 7:11-17
August 9, 2015: Gospel Community Study Guide

This Study Guide is based on a sermon by Dr. Joshua Mack. You will find the link to the sermon here.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=9221561363>

Getting Started:

Have you ever had a problem where you needed the help of someone important and it seemed like they didn't really care about what was happening to you? If so, describe how that made you feel?

If we understand what the Bible says about Jesus we understand there is no human being in the universe who is as important as He is. After all, He's no ordinary human being. Paul says the fullness of deity dwells in Him. This means He is God and man. Looking at Jesus we see what God is like.

That's important for us to remember as we study the gospel of Luke and read the stories that Luke tells us about Him. Because, it means, as we look at Jesus and the way He relates to people, we can discover the answer to a very important question:

Does God actually care about what's happening to us?

The Big Idea:

Now specifically we are going to talk about one of our biggest problems, and that is death. Does God care about the fact that we are going to die? Does He care enough to help us with this kind of problem?

We are going to look at Luke 7 and the story about Jesus raising a widow's son this evening. While there are many different things we could learn from this story, but as we look at this together, we are going to focus in on Jesus and His compassion for hurting people.

Into the Bible:
7:11-17

Read Luke

The Setting

One of the first things we do when we read a story in the Bible is try to get an idea of the setting. What's happening? Where is it happening? What is going on around the story?

This passage begins by saying, "Soon afterwards."

Soon after what?

Where has Jesus been and where is Jesus going?

Why is Jesus going there?

Who went with Jesus? Why do you think they went with Jesus?

What happens as Jesus and his crowd draws near to the gate of the town?

How do you think the crowd responded to what they saw?

A Jewish Funeral

I don't know the last time you have been to a funeral, but let's think a little about what a first century Jewish funeral was like. Read the following description from Paul Miller and then note what are some of the differences between these funerals and the way we hold funerals today. In a first century Jewish funeral:

- The body is buried within 24 hours (same as Jewish funerals today).
- The body is placed on the ground in the house. It is washed and dressed. The hair and nails are cut.
- Everyone in the town is expected to come. Mother sits on the floor moaning.
- As procession begins, the body is placed in an open wicker basket or wooden plank, face up with the hands folded.
- In the Galilee region, the women lead the procession because (in the belief of the day) they brought death into the world.
- Unshod pallbearers frequently change hands so that many can bear the burden.
- Mourning women and flute players accompany the procession. Even a poor family is expected to have one mourning woman and two flute players. These were real professions. Amos (5:16) and Jeremiah (9:17) mention those who are "skilled in mourning." An example of professional mourners is in Luke 8:52-53, when Jesus says that Jairus' daughter "is not dead but asleep," and all the mourners begin to laugh—only a professional can go from weeping to joking and back again.
- They encourage one another to grieve by saying, "Weep with them, all you who are bitter of heart."

What are some of the similarities between this and a modern funeral and what are some of the differences?

No matter what culture you are from, funerals are sad.

A Hurting Mother

If Jesus had walked into any Jewish funeral he would have heard lots of crying. But this was a particularly sad funeral.

What does Luke tell us about this woman that helps us understand why this was such a sad moment in her life? What are all the things that this woman had lost?

What are some of the additional things she had lost? (Think here – if she had no husband or son – what challenges was she going to face in the future?)

“To have a son meant everything in Ancient Near-Eastern culture. When the prophet Jeremiah tells the people of Jerusalem how to weep when their city is under siege, he says, “O my people, put on sackcloth and roll in ashes; mourn with bitter wailing as for an only son, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us” (Jeremiah 6:26).”

What kind of thoughts do you think this widow might have had about God?

What kind of thoughts would you have had about God in a situation like this?

When someone loses a lot in Africa, like a son or a husband, what is some gossip that people sometimes say about them?

Death sometimes causes us to ask questions. And in a sense, it should. What is the ultimate reason for death? Why is there even death in this world?

Our Compassionate Savior

Here we are seeing God walking around in human form. And He is confronted with someone who is experiencing the tragic results of man’s rebellion against Him. And yet, how does Jesus respond to her?

How did Jesus love this woman? This isn’t supposed to be a difficult question. Let’s just list the most obvious ways Jesus loved this woman and then we can go through them one by one.

1. *He sees her*

The text says, “...the Lord saw her...”

Around how many people are surrounding Jesus at this moment? (Do you remember approximately how many people came with him and the likely amount of people that were there at the funeral?)

What else could Jesus have been looking at in this moment? Why do you think Jesus looks at her? If Jesus reveals God to us, how might this encourage us about God's attitude towards those who are hurting?

2. *He feels for her*

But Jesus didn't only look at her.

What does the text tell us his response was when he saw her in pain?

Now, how did Luke know that Jesus felt compassion? The easy answer is to say that he was inspired, and that's true. But we know that Luke used firsthand accounts to write this letter. It is likely then that he heard from someone who was there that day that Jesus felt compassion.

How do you think the person who was there that day knew that Jesus felt compassion?

What does compassion look like? If you were standing next to Jesus, what do you think you would have seen him doing that would have demonstrated he was feeling compassion?

What is compassion? When you are feeling compassion what is happening physically and emotionally?

What does Jesus do that shows he is feeling compassion?

How should this response of Jesus encourage us?

3. *He speaks to her*

Not only does Jesus feel with this woman, he acts to deal with the problem she is experiencing. Instead of first going straight to the place where the dead boy lay however, he went to her.

What did Jesus say to her?

Why is that surprising? Why does Jesus tell her this?

What do you think this tells us about compassion?

4. *He helps her*

Jesus needs get the people who are carrying the boy to the graveside to stop.

How does he do so?

Just from this little picture of the way Jesus stopped this funeral, what do you think we might be able to learn about what Jesus is like?

How would most people stop a funeral procession of 400 people?

One man explains, “We are watching the behavior of an ancient king, someone who is really powerful. Think of what Jesus is about to do: he is going to bring a dead person back to life, but he is humble and understated about it. He has nothing to prove. He does not need to draw attention to himself. There is a gentle yet powerful dignity in wordlessly stopping a procession of 400 people by touching the casket.”

What does Jesus do to raise the boy from the dead? What does that tell us about Jesus? What hope does that give us?

It's great that Jesus feels compassion but if all Jesus were able to do was feel compassion that would not be enough for us! Our problems are too big. We need someone who will not only feel for us, but also will be able to act on our behalf. And Jesus here is proving that He is a perfect Savior because not only does He have compassion for us, He is able to solve our deepest problems, like the problem of death.

Bringing it Home:

This is just one instance of Jesus raising someone from the dead, but it's exciting for us, because what does the gospel tell us about the resurrection of the dead? How does this story encourage you that what the gospel says is true?

I know that life is filled with problems, but this is one of your greatest problems, the problem of death. If Jesus really is able to defeat death like this, and if he cares enough to do so, how should that impact you? How do you think a person should be different who doesn't have to fear death?

Summing Up:

What are some of the main encouragements or challenges you have taken from what we have studied together today? Is there any specific word of praise you would like to give to God for what you have learned about Jesus today? How about questions? Do you have any thing you are still wondering from what we have talked about? What are some of the practical differences what you studied makes on your life? What would you like to share with someone else? Is there any specific issue that this study has

brought up that you want the members of your gospel community to be praying for you about?