

“DON’T CRY”
Luke 7:11-17
Key Verse: 7:13

“When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’”

In the last passage Jesus praised a centurion’s faith. The centurion had a shepherd’s heart for his dying servant. Most of all, he had “say the word” faith—absolute faith in the power of Jesus’ word. When we have “say the word” faith, we can please and amaze our Lord Jesus.

Last week we were amazed by the faith of Dr. Ben Toh. With a shepherd’s heart he went to Kiev and Odessa to attend their Spring Bible Conferences and to see about the health of our precious missionaries. Actually, Dr. Ben had very painful problems in his own body. But he did not think about his own pain. He only wanted to serve our missionaries in Ukraine. His journey schedule was not easy; he hardly slept. On short notice, he prepared and delivered a message about God’s hope for Israel and God’s hope for Ukraine. He also accepted God’s hope personally. Then, a miracle happened. Although he returned to Chicago from Ukraine on Wednesday night, he still carried out ten one-to-one Bible studies. Many of them were new sheep fished by Agi Toh. We learned that where there is a shepherd’s heart and “say the word” faith in Jesus, a miracle happens.

Now we are beginning summer ministry. There are so many young people whose spiritual lives are in the balance this summer. Will they immerse themselves in a life of sin? Or will they come to Jesus? This is our responsibility. When we have shepherd’s hearts for them and “say the word” faith in Jesus, many young Americans can be healed from their sinsicknesses and come to God. In this way, our nation can be changed into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Therefore, we must fight against “summer mentality” and live as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. May God bless us to do so.

In today’s passage Jesus meets a woman whose only son had just died. What great sorrow for a mother that her only son died! What was worse, this woman was a widow. Who could understand her sorrow? Who could possibly comfort her? But our Lord Jesus said to her, “Don’t cry.” We want to think about why Jesus said this to her. May God help us to hear Jesus’ words, “Don’t cry.”

First, Jesus’ procession of life meets a procession of death (11-12).

Look at verse 11. “Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him.” Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd of people were traveling together. They did not go just a short distance, like around the block. They traveled about 25 miles south to a town called Nain. We can understand why Jesus’ disciples went with him, for they had made personal commitments to him and wanted to learn from him. But a large crowd also went with them. They had seen God’s work through Jesus and were compelled to follow him for the time being. They could feel the shepherd’s love of Jesus and they had experienced the power of Jesus to heal the sick and drive out evil spirits. They felt they were in the kingdom of God, for where Jesus is, there is the kingdom of God. So they happily followed Jesus to Nain. Perhaps they sang, “Onward Christian Soldiers,” as they marched along the road.

Look at verse 12. “As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her.” This procession was very different from the first in mood and contents. It was a funeral procession for the only son of a widowed mother. At the head of the procession, the young man’s lifeless corpse was being carried. Following was the boy’s mother, weeping and grieving over the loss of her son. Behind her were many people from the town. They, too, must have sorrowed and grieved, for it was tragic for all who heard about it—not only because they cared about the widow, but also because they associated her sorrow with their own sorrows. It was a family tragedy and a community tragedy.

Who could understand this woman at the moment? First, she had lost her husband and now her only son. He died too young. At the very moment he should be sprouting into a responsible man and a source of blessing, he died. Now he was being carried out for burial to go back to the dust of the earth. His boyish features, which had been so cute to his mom, would rot away, decompose and go back to the dust of the ground. Not only did the woman lose the object of her affection, but she lost her security in this world. She would have to support herself and manage her home by

herself. She lost the meaning and purpose of her life. She lost everything when she lost her only son at his young age. No one knew how to comfort her. Rather, all the people of the town began to mourn together with her. The power of death had swallowed them all. This is an allegory of all mankind under the power of death.

Last September, we experienced the most sorrowful tragedy when we were suddenly attacked by homicide bombers. New York's firemen and policemen, truly courageous heroes, were killed in the tragedy. Their family members were stung by the power of death. We did not know what to say to them. The power of death and its symptoms overwhelmed us and covered our land like a shroud.

Look at verse 12 again. The two processions approached each other. The sounds of "Onward Christian Soldiers," began to mingle with the sounds of mourning and wailing. People in both processions were surprised to hear each other expressing opposite emotions. They began to listen to each other and quiet came over them. But one woman could not stop crying. It was the mother of the dead man. Jesus surveyed the scene and his eyes fell on this woman.

Second, Jesus said, "Don't cry" (13).

Look at verse 13. "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.'" Here we learn the heart of Jesus. As soon as Jesus saw this woman, his heart went out to her. Jesus' attention and affection were immediately focused on this woman. To Jesus, she was the only person in the universe. He was ready to do anything for her and wanted to help her at any cost. She had not sought Jesus at all, as the centurion had for his dying servant. She happened to meet Jesus by chance, as his procession crossed paths with hers. She said nothing; she only cried. But Jesus heard her cry. And Jesus' heart went out to her. Jesus said to her, "Don't cry." "Don't cry"? How could he say to her, "Don't cry"? It would be reasonable to say, "I am so sorry." Or, "I feel your pain." Could we say to New York's widows, "Don't cry"? But Jesus said to her, "Don't cry." When Jesus said, "Don't cry," he was not telling her to live without feelings. When Jesus said, "Don't cry," he meant he would carry her sorrows. Only Jesus could say this to her. Only Jesus could heal the sorrow that made her cry.

We all experience sorrow in our lives. Sometimes it is good for us. But sometimes it is harmful to us. When we cry, we must think about why we cry. St. Paul tells us about two different kinds of sorrow. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." Godly sorrow is sorrow for our sins. It leads us to repentance and salvation. This sorrow is good for us. We must shed many tears because of our sins until we receive God's salvation. This was the sorrow of St. Peter when he denied Jesus three times (Lk 22:62). It led him to deep repentance and finally to make a new relationship with Jesus on the basis of Jesus' love for him. Ultimately, this sorrow led Peter to become a great shepherd who encouraged the early church to evangelize Rome and the whole world. We can see this sorrow in growing student shepherds and shepherdesses who sometimes break into tears when they share their testimonies at the Friday Leaders' Meeting. This is healthy. So we give them tissues and say, "Continue, continue."

There is also the sorrow of a broken shepherd's heart. St. Paul had this sorrow for his people Israel when he said, "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" (Ro 9:2). This sorrow leads us to pray to God on behalf of our people and our sheep. This sorrow made Jeremiah the prophet cry out, "Oh, that my head were a spring of water and my eyes a fountain of tears! I would weep day and night for the slain of my people" (Jer 9:1). This sorrow is growing in many missionaries and shepherds as God enlarges our hearts to embrace young Americans.

But there is also worldly sorrow. Worldly sorrow is not good for us. In fact, it leads to death. Usually it is self-pity and it comes from a "victim mentality." Esau had this kind of self-pity when he failed to maintain his birthright and to inherit his father's spiritual blessing, which he later sought with tears (Gen 27:34). This self-pity made Esau hold a grudge and hate his brother Jacob to the point that he planned to murder him (Gen 27:41). We must know that self-pity is a spiritual disease that leads to death. When self-pity comes into our hearts, we must repent as a matter of life and death.

Then there is the sorrow that comes from the power of death. In the book of Genesis, we find Jacob. He loved his youngest son Joseph more than any of his other sons. And he made it clear by giving Joseph a coat of many colors, indicating him as his heir. Then Joseph's brothers became insanely jealous and plotted to kill Joseph. Instead, they sold him as a slave. But they told Jacob that a wild animal had devoured him. Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son Joseph many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he

refused to be comforted. “No,” he said, “in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.” Jacob wept for Joseph and grieved over him for many years.

We cannot really say that the woman in this passage falls into a certain category of sorrow. In fact, we must admit that we cannot really understand this woman. There is a saying, “No one understands a widow’s heart, except another widow.” Yet, even ordinary widows could not understand this widow, whose only son had just died. But Jesus understood. And Jesus said, “Don’t cry.”

To Jesus, she cried because of her unbelief. She cried because she was under the power of death. One time, at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus wept (Jn 11:35). Jesus tasted the anguish of mankind who suffer under the power of death. And he wept over our unbelief. But Jesus did not stop there. Jesus not only tasted and understood our sorrow; Jesus carried our sorrows. Isaiah 53:3-5 says, “He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”

Jesus died for our sins and was buried. But on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead. St. Peter met the Risen Christ and said, “God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him” (Ac 2:24). God’s power to give life is greater than the power of death. St. Paul said, “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1Co 15:54b). It is because all men who have ever lived will be raised from the dead and there will be no more dead people and no more death. Revelation 21:1-4 says, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He 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.’” Through his death and resurrection, Jesus solved the problem of sin and death and opened the door to the kingdom of God. In this way, Jesus wipes every tear from our eyes.

There was a boy in Korea whose mother died young. So he grew up under his step-mother who used him like a servant for the household. He wanted to study English and grow up to be an international figure. His stepbrothers were allowed to study English, even though they really didn’t want to, but he was not. One night he was secretly reading an English text book under the covers of his bed, using a kerosene lamp. His stepmother found him and beat him badly for burning kerosene oil. He cried and cried. Sorrow grew in him until he was 28 years old. Then he heard Jesus’ word, “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:10). He realized that his life was in God’s hand, that he was God’s workmanship. His sufferings in boyhood were not meaningless; they were God’s discipline to help him grow in humanity and prepare for shepherd life. Jesus carried his sorrows and gave him new life. From that time on, he grew as a mother-like shepherd for young people in Korea, America, Germany, Russia and the whole world.

There was a young woman who cried endlessly. It was because her parents broke their family and went separate ways. She was pretty and intelligent and talented in many ways. But she could not stop crying. Many people were kind to her. But whenever they greeted her, she did not respond. Her sorrow was too deep to overcome. But through one-to-one Bible study she heard the word of Jesus. It took time, about ten years. But the word of Jesus healed her from sorrow and made her a new creation in Christ. Now she smiles and laughs for no obvious reason. She loves her husband and her children and takes care of God’s sheep with her heart and prayers. Jesus carries our sorrows and gives us new life. And he says to each one of us, “Don’t cry.”

Third, “Young man, get up!” (14-17)

Look at verse 14. After telling the woman, “Don’t cry,” Jesus went up and touched the coffin. Those carrying it stood still. The sorrowful funeral procession stopped. Silence fell over them and expectation was in the air. Then Jesus said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” The dead man sat up and began to talk. He might have said: “Praise Jesus! The kingdom of God is beautiful! Dad was there, Mom. He is so strong, handsome and honorable; you will love him more than ever. And Mom, I promise to be a good boy from now on. I will do all my homework and I will

teach the Bible to my friends. Mom, don't cry." Then Jesus gave him back to his mother. She must have been amazed and overjoyed. Her precious only son was raised to life. Not only did she have her son back, but she had seen the power of Jesus to raise the dead.

Here we learn the power of Jesus' word. When he said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" a dead man sat up and began to talk. Jesus' word has power to raise the dead. In John 5:28,29 Jesus said, "...for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."

Sometimes, when we see young men, they look dead even though their bodies are alive. In truth, it is because of their sins. Ephesians 2:1 says, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins..." One young man was a promising honor student and the pride and joy of his family as the only son. But one night he committed sin against God. After that, he died inwardly. He lost his humanity, his heart, his desire to live in this world. He became so dark and gloomy that he looked like a dead man. But through one-to-one Bible study, Jesus' word came into his heart. His dead soul came back to life again. He got up from his despair and condemnation and the power of sin and death and began to speak. At first, he spoke a lot of nonsense. Now he speaks about Jesus. Jesus' word has the power to raise the dead. When we see young men who are dead in their sins, we should not give up on them. Jesus' word can raise the dead. In Ezekiel chapter 37, the prophet was told to prophesy to a valley of dead bones. When he did so, the bones came together and tendons, flesh and skin covered them. The prophet prophesied again and breath came into them; they came to life and stood on their feet—a vast army. The word of Jesus can raise many dead American young men into soldiers of Christ, a spiritual army which can make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Look at verse 16. The people in both processions saw Jesus raise the young man to life. They were filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." There was no more sorrow in their hearts. There was no more power of death in their hearts. God Almighty and his life-giving power filled the hearts of the people. This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. One person's resurrection, be it physical or spiritual, glorifies God and blesses the world.

In this passage, Jesus said, "Don't cry," to a widow whose only son had died. It is because Jesus died for our sins and rose again from the dead to save all who believe and bring us back to the kingdom of God. Jesus' word has power to raise the dead. May Jesus wipe all your tears. May Jesus help us believe and teach his word until God raises young Americans into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.