

“A Heart That Goes Out”

(Resurrection: Week #3)

Luke 7: 11- 17 (NIV)

¹¹ Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 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. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”

¹⁴ Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶ They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” ¹⁷ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.



Reflection on the Word:

1. Read 1 Kings 17: 10- 24 and 2 Kings 4: 8- 37.
2. What similarities do you find in 1 Kings 17: 10- 24 and Luke 7: 11- 17?
3. What similarities do you find in 2 Kings 4: 8- 37 and Luke 7: 11- 17?
4. Do you think Jesus was aware of these stories when he did what he did?
5. Do you think his biblical awareness led him to intervene or was it something more?
6. What would have happened to the widow if her son had not been raised?
7. What “kind” of news spread throughout Judea about Jesus and how is this news related to the rest of chapter 7?

Family Time or Small Group (Better Together) Discussion:

- 1) In this story, Jesus intervenes without being asked. Does Jesus need to be asked? Are there any situations where Jesus intervenes without being asked?
- 2) Are there any situations where Jesus is intervening in your life?
- 3) Widows and orphans should _____. (Fill in the blank)
- 4) God has always had a heart for the poor. How would you complete this statement: *I have always had a heart for* _____. (Fill in the blank)
- 5) How can I pray for you?

Series Resources:

- All of our scripture passages for the *Resurrection* series were submitted by individuals and Sunday School classes from Great Bridge United Methodist Church. Thank you to everyone for participating and finding great stories of resurrection in the Gospels!

Series Progression (from "Tale of Two Daughters" based on Mark 5: 25- 43 by Rev. Tim Craig):

How do you feel about tests?

My wife Ann informed me that May should be or is; by her expert opinion, testing month. And you know what? I believe her. I believe her, not only because she is my wife and I have to or else; I believe her because she speaks the truth.

She's in the know ... right there on the front lines. First- hand experience and an eye witness ... yup, that's her. She's a First- Grade teacher and she gives the tests. Lots of tests in the month May as grades and final grades are due by the end of the month.

Tests ... ewww ...

Do you remember taking tests?

I always liked the tests where you had to figure out the answer and show all you work. A good algebra equation like ... $2x + 4 = 16$. Subtract the four from both sides ... divide by 2 and the answer is 6. Plug it back in and check and you just know the answer is right. That's my kind of test.

But there is another kind of test that leads to a different tale.

And this test I cannot stand.

But you might.

It's the multiple choice test.

How many here prefer the multiple choice test? With A being one answer, B being another answer, C yet another answer and the dreaded D being the famous *all of above* or *none of the above*. I once got into a lot of trouble because when handed the multiple choice test, I looked it over and was confused on question number one. I wrote a note underneath my name saying that the test was unfair. It was unfair because question number one had the famous D choice of *all of the above*. I went on to explain to the teacher that there were no answers *above* the question only answers to the *side*.

Think about it.

I was that kind of a student ... and my teacher was not that kind. Literally. She told me about a different letter. And that my choice was between A, B, C, D and F.

Multiple choice tests and I just don't get along but ... but taking a page out of my wife's playbook, I thought about giving the test instead of taking the test. And I know just the people to give this test to ... smart, intelligent and oh so wise sages and scholars.

So, here we go- multiple choice. Who experienced resurrection? A) Jairus' daughter; B) the woman who was healed from a 12- year hemorrhage; C) Peter, James and John; or D) all of the above?

Let's start with the obvious ... letter A.

An excellent choice for resurrection ... after all Jairus' daughter is raised. Raised from death and given new life because of Jesus. After the raising of Lazarus, what Pastor Amanda preached on last week, this passage is a very close second to finding a resurrection story with ...

with the most obvious of connections to the word "resurrection" meaning the physical raising of the dead.

Jesus takes her by the hand and says in Aramaic, "Little girl get up." And she does. She gets up and starts walking around. Everyone is amazed because just moments before she was dead. She experienced a resurrection.

But before you pick answer A, isn't it strange that passage that I read to you has someone else involved in the story. Oh, by the way, the little girl was 12 years old. And oh, by the way, the other person involved in the story has been suffering with a hemorrhage for 12 years. Coincidence? Or connection?

And why does this suffering woman interrupt the story of Jairus daughter and yet her interruption is not big and boisterous, as most interruptions tend to be. Hers is quieter. She seeks to just touch the garment that Jesus is wearing; believing that in doing so she will be healed. Healed, when her attempts at physical healing from a long succession of physicians has left her perhaps feeling dead with no hope.

She takes one more chance and reaches out.

And immediately she is healed. Has she not experienced a resurrection?

Well, apparently Jesus thinks so because he stops, and he reaches out for her. He reaches out with words of new birth that could be missed in our reading and hearing. An appropriate greeting would have been to simply address her as "woman." Instead Jesus said to her, "Daughter, you took a risk of faith, and now you're healed and whole. Live well, live blessed! Be healed of your plague." He calls her "daughter" ... a term of endearment. A term not meant for fully grown women but for little girls. Coincidence? Or connection?

Is Mark linking these two daughters together in a tale of faith told to have us see the resurrection and the power of the resurrection in many ways? New life. New hope. New day. So, before you circle the obvious answer A, maybe we should consider B too. Maybe we should see a connection? Maybe we should believe in the connection? The tale of two daughter reveals that resurrection is all around us and that God's Son Jesus is truly making all things new.

Which is the core message of the Gospel and the hope of the world. Jesus is the resurrection and the life. And the ones given the task to tell our daughters' tale and to proclaim the power of the resurrection were the disciples. Disciples like Peter, James and John. Disciples who saw Jesus do miraculous things like heal the sick, give sight to the blind, command the lame to walk again, cast out the evil spirits that ravaged the mind and body, and to even raise the dead. Disciples who told more about these events than the actual resurrection of Jesus.

Because, with his resurrection they finally got it. The world doesn't have the last word. Jesus does. And death in all of its' forms, while it may test us at times, has no answer that can stand up to all that is above. The name that is above all names is the One who brought Jairus' daughter back to life, and gave new hope to a woman who reached for just a touch, and a new day to appreciate, live for, and proclaim for those who would be called disciples ... and that my friends is your tale to tell as well.

Tell it well and let your answer reveal that you believe in all the above.

Amen!

Sermon Points:

When I was a teenager, I once encountered my mother and step- father in a heated discussion. I made one of those fate filled turn of the corners ... going from the living room into the kitchen ... and there they were; the two of them.

Now even under normal circumstances, most teens know better ... they know that when mom and dad are together in the same room that it is best to turn and walk in another direction. Taking on two parents will not go well ... especially when they ask, “we need your opinion.”

O Lord ... save me!

But it was too late and there was nowhere to run and hide.

There on the kitchen counter was an open pack of Oreo sandwich cookies.

As my dad opened up the cupboard, took out a glass and then opened the refrigerator ... all I could think of saying was, “I didn’t open those.”

My mom quickly countered, “we know, your father did.”

I responded, “Whew, I thought I was in trouble.”

My dad, with a glass of milk in his hand and his quirky smile, said faintly, “not yet.” And before I knew it, I was dragged into their heated discussion. A life altering discussion of THE WAY ... the way to best eat an Oreo cookie.

In disbelief, I watched two grown adults suddenly become children before my eyes. My dad dipping his Oreo cookie into the milk and then slurping all the Oreo goodness. He was loud and animated; clearly trying to convince me that his way was the best. Meanwhile, my mom carefully separated the chocolate cookies pieces and then began eating the center. She countered my dad’s slurps by saying, “this is so good and not nearly as messy.”

Then after their demonstrations, they asked me THE QUESTION. *Which way was better?*

And my dad, who didn’t like to lose, pulled out his wallet and said, “here son, here’s your allowance early.” (Which was funny because I didn’t have an allowance prior.) I was about to vote for his way when ...

My mom, who didn’t like to lose either, said these loving words of motivation, “remember who birthed you, who changed your diapers, who put Band-Aids on your boo- boos, who took you to the emergency room when you skateboarded into a trash dumpster, and on and on and on ... recounting nearly every life event as only a mother could do.”

My choice ... money or mom?

And you’re right ... I didn’t really have a choice. I did that which was right and noble. I chose ...

Our choices are really important aren’t they? Our choices say something about us. They show us what and who we value. Our choices reveal ... our convictions ... our passions ... our everything. It can be argued that our choices affect the lives of others. They can have a positive impact or a negative impact.

Some choices we make from the intellect and some we make from the heart. Some choices are sandwiched in between ... like the Oreo ... a combination of heart and mind that in the end reveal The Way. The way of Jesus, the gospel, and the power of the resurrection.

When one of our church members sent this story to me as an example of the resurrection; they did so with an observation. "I believe that this is the first story of resurrection that I can find in Luke's gospel." They were right. It is the first story of resurrection. A story sandwiched between the faith of the Centurion ... a Roman Centurion whose servant was very sick and *about to die* ... why would a Roman Centurion have such faith in a Jewish rabbi? Next the story of John the Baptist, who is in prison and sends his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one or should we expect someone else?"

Both stories are stories of faith and the choices that we bring to or give to faith. The Centurion believes that if Jesus just says a word, his servant will be healed. The Centurion returns to find his servant healed. John the Baptist's disciples hear and see the Messianic promise that the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the sick are healed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. In doing such, Jesus lifts John's spirit and confirms John's choice as the one who made the valleys low and the path straight so that the Word of God would be proclaimed and the Messiah would bring about restoration.

But sandwiched in between is our story that we have read this morning and the choices of others that is often so prevalent in the outer "cookies" of Luke chapter 7 is nowhere to be seen in Luke 7: 11- 17. Jesus is the only one who makes any choices in our story.

He sees a funeral procession as he approaches the gate of the town. He makes the choice to get involved. Now, I wouldn't be a good pastor if I didn't tell you that this story has some Old Testament imagery of prophets from the past. The prophets Elijah (1 Kings 17: 10- 24) and Elisha (2 Kings 4: 8- 37), both had stories in which they called upon God's help to restore to life the son of a widow.

Elijah went to the gate of a town called Zarephath. There he met a widow and heard her story of the loss of her son. He intervened and asked God to restore his life. God did. Elisha went to a town Shunem and befriended a woman who later came to him at the death of her only son. Elisha went to her house, prayed with her, and God restored his life. The town of Shunem was near the town of Nain. They were only one and one half miles apart. Certainly, these two stories are in play, in our story from Luke's gospel, but there is something more to our story. There is a center.

As I looked at the gospel text, I thought that maybe Jesus made the choice to get involved because of the Old Testament connection. Maybe he made the choice to get involved because he knew that John the Baptist's disciples were coming with the Messianic question and while he had healed and preached, he had not restored anyone from the dead. Maybe ... maybe it was more than just what was going on in his mind. Maybe the choice to get involved came from his heart. After all our choices reveal ... our convictions ... our passions ... our everything.

This choice certainly does. And Luke makes it clear when he writes: "*When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.' Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, 'Young man, I say to you, get up!' The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.*"

Our understanding of the resurrection must include the heart of Jesus. The heart to see us as we are and what we need to be whole. It is his heart that goes out to us that we might have new life. Life to save others ... as will be the case of the son who will return to care for his widowed mother. Life to be saved ... as will be the case for the widowed mother. That either way ... whether we dunk or go for the center first ... we have life because of the heart of Jesus that goes out for us each and every day. Amen.

Thought for the Week Ahead:

"In a world where the dead have returned to life, the word 'trouble' loses its meaning."

- Dennis Hopper