

The Third Sunday after Pentecost

June 9, 2013

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 7:11-17

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 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. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it 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. 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." This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. (NIV)

When was the last time you cried? Do you remember? What caused your tears? Maybe some physical pain filled your eyes with tears. Have you ever cried because you've been hurt or disappointed by someone you really care about? Possibly you have recently wept as you stood over the grave where they were placing the dead body of your loved one.

Whether you are more of the stoic who never cries or a constant weeper, our Lord has a message for you this morning. No matter if things in your life have been going smoothly or if you have hit a rough patch in the road of life, there is a word of encouragement for you today. Our Savior comes to comfort us. Our Savior comes to strengthen us. Our Savior comes to speak to us again in His Word. Listen as your Savior speaks these two simply and heartfelt words for: **Jesus says: "Don't cry."**

Have you ever been told: "Don't cry?" In what way was this said to you? Father's Day is one week away and I'm not just saying this hoping my children are paying attention, but because I think many of us can probably recall examples when our fathers told us: "Don't cry." Perhaps you had a dad that said something along the lines of: "Stop your crying. Quit being a whiner. Grow up. Don't be such a baby." Especially to their sons fathers want them to become men, and so one lesson a dad tries to impart to his boy is: "don't cry."

But maybe you have heard these words in another way. Perhaps you can think of a time when your father put his hand on your shoulder or your mother took you in her arms and said: "Don't cry I am here for you and will take care of it. Don't cry everything will be alright. Dry your tears, it will be okay, it may be tough now, but things will get better. You will get through this, I promise." Then those words "Don't cry" serve to comfort and strengthen us and make us feel better! Yet, how much better still when those words come from the One we hear speak them today. Now as we turn to our text listen to the way and reason our Savior Jesus says: "Don't cry."

It would be hard for Hollywood screenwriters to come up with a scene more tragic than what we find in this city of Nain located just a few miles southwest of Nazareth in southern Galilee. Soon after Jesus healed the centurion's servant, Jesus is followed by many disciples and a large crowd to this city. Most cities had walls around them so people coming into the city would pass people going out the gate of a city. As Jesus and this large crowd are entering the city listen to what they see: "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." Talk about sad! The

simple facts speak for themselves. This woman has to bury her son, her only son. She already had to bury her husband. Her son was all she had left and now he is gone too. She lost not only her only son, but also her financial support. There was no social security in her day. Imagine the grief and the pain this widow was feeling. Imagine the tears not only from her eyes but in the eyes of those who are following her as her dead son is carried out of the city on a stretcher.

"When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Jesus, the Lord, sees this woman and His heart goes out to her. Jesus has pity on her and with deep sympathy approaches this widow. Then, Jesus simply says ***"Don't cry."*** He literally commands her to stop her weeping. How could Jesus give such a command at this time? Yet, understand the manner in which Jesus orders her to stop her crying. Jesus graciously tells her to dry her tears. Jesus speaks sympathetically in love and with a heart of compassion when He says: ***"Don't cry."*** What an insight into the heart of our Savior! Jesus loves His people hurt by sin and stricken with sadness. Jesus sees and Jesus cares.

Isn't this comforting? How has sin messed up your life recently? Have you had a fight with a loved one? Are you carrying around guilt? Have you recently been stung by death? Have you been there weeping and hurting like this widow? Have you felt hopeless or helpless? Then meet Jesus again in His Word. Listen to Jesus speak to you as He speaks to this widow. Hear your Lord say: ***"Don't cry."*** Lend your ear to Jesus as He says dry your eyes and stop weeping. Jesus says it to us with compassion. His heart goes out to us when we suffer in this sinful world.

But Jesus does so much more than just speak to us with words of compassion. We are able to do that! We, like the crowds of the city following the widow, are able to be there for one another. We can comfort each other with encouraging words and actions of love. But Jesus is able to offer so much more. Jesus is able to say ***"don't cry"*** because Jesus is able to do something to wipe our tears away. ***"Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it 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. They were all filled with awe and praised God."***

Can you picture this? Suddenly, the scene goes from tragic to triumphant, from one of sadness to joy, from one of defeat to victory. Jesus shows His power even over death. Jesus shows the real reason He came to earth. He came to give life, even after death. At the command of Jesus this young man is given back to His mother and all the people are filled with awe and start praising God. ***"A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people."***

We can't say for sure how much the people really understood when they made these remarks. But there is great truth in them. Jesus is the great prophet Moses wrote about in Deuteronomy - the Messiah about whom Moses prophesied. God has come to help His people unlike ever before. God is with them. ***"This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country."***

What a collision at the gate of the city just outside of Nain! Two groups collide. One was led by Jesus, the Lord and giver of life. The other was led by a dead person, the only son of a widow. One group was excited to be following Jesus. The other group was grieving following this procession. But when these two groups collide, Jesus changes everything. Death is no match for the Savior. He who was dead was now alive. All who were sad began to praise God. Could you imagine being at that funeral?

I can tell you what it is like to be at a funeral where Jesus is present. It is an awesome thing to have Him there to wipe the tears away and to say to us, like Jesus did for this widow at Nain: **"Don't cry."** Jesus gives us a reason to dry our tears. This is because Jesus Himself collided with death in a far greater way. He collided with sin and hell. Jesus collided with God's wrath. We know where that collision took place - on the cross. There Jesus bled to pay the price for all our sinful indulgences. There Jesus suffered for all the times we have despaired. There Jesus died for our lack of trust and all our other many sins. In this collision of all collisions, Jesus won the victory. On the third day God made sure the victory over our last enemy, death, was proclaimed loud and long for all to hear and see. For although Easter has been over two months ago already the empty grave remains our greatest comfort. The all important truth that Christ is risen, that He is risen indeed, is still our most wonderful hope and joy.

Retired Pastor Hoppe wrote in the *People's Bible* series for 1 Corinthians. **"Death has destroyed the mightiest of kings and emperors. It has broken into every home and has taken its toll of every human family. It has robbed every one of its victims of all his earthly possessions. It has filled the world with futile tears and helpless groans. It has snatched away for all eternity the hour of repentance that could have saved the godless, and has inflicted pain on even the greatest of God's saints. Except for Enoch and Elijah, death has won every contest with life. There is no masking its ugliness nor wishing away its awesome power. Despite all his victories over disease and mortal injury, man still has no sword to slay and no shield to ward off this cruel and hungry monster. But to one foe it must yield. The King of kings has vanquished the king of terrors."**

Today, we see this truth again in our lesson. So whether you have cried recently or not, whether you never cry or find yourself constantly weeping the most important thing is to listen to Jesus, to know Jesus, to put your faith in Him whose heart goes out to you when you are sad. With Jesus on our side, not sin, not the devil, not even death itself has any power over us. As Paul writes to Timothy, our Savior **"has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1)**. So this Savior, having made us dear children of our heavenly Father, comes to us now again in His Word. He comes to speak to us - to comfort us - to strengthen us. With a heart of compassion and with a power which gives life, even eternal life, Jesus says: **"Don't cry."** Amen.