

I. Introduction

Good morning! We haven't had a Reverend Fun cartoon in a while, so I thought I would start this morning with this. Two guards are standing by the empty tomb and one says, *"I bet ten shekels those Christians have fifty new songs by this weekend."* I think that guard probably won his bet.



Ever since Jesus rose from the grave, the church has been celebrating the great victory that Jesus has won over sin and death. Two thousand years ago, Peter preached at the entrance to the temple in Jerusalem, saying, **"(Acts 3:15), "You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this."** Jesus was crucified, but He rose again and He is alive, here with us today.

Peter calls Jesus, **"the Author of life,"** and this is a wonderful title for our Lord. Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son, the Creator, the source of light and life. In the busyness of day-to-day life, sometimes we forget the pure joy of just being alive. But God gives us children to remind us that life is good. Let's take time this week to stop and smell the flowers, to admire the beauty of the sky, to leap for joy. When we take joy in being alive, we bring glory to Jesus, **"the Author of life."**



At the same time, we are also very aware that we live in a fallen world. There are many things that remind us of sin and death. For example, a couple of weeks ago I took a walk and found the Sanadayama Military Cemetery (真田山陸軍墓地) just ten minutes walk from here. At the cemetery, long rows of the graves of those who died in war reminded me of how fragile life is. The sorrow of death can feel overwhelming, but at the same time, this sorrow also reminds us of how precious life is. And we take comfort in knowing that Jesus has defeated death and one day death will be no more, 1 Corinthians 15:26, **"The last enemy to be destroyed is death."**



As we continue our study in Luke this morning, we will visit the village of Nain where Jesus will raise a young man from death. Here are a couple of photos of Nain. This old photo shows a small church surrounded by ruins. But today, a small village has been rebuilt on the site. Nain is a small village in the hills, a few miles from Nazareth. Let's read Luke 7:11-17.



II. Scripture 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 coffin, and those carrying it 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.

III. Teaching

Let's try to imagine the scene. This photo shows an old road in the hills near Nain. Imagine that you are following Jesus on a road like this. There is a big crowd, the disciples and also others who are curious about this new teacher who speaks with authority and does amazing miracles. Today, Jesus has decided to go to Nain. You can't imagine why Jesus would want to go to such a tiny and uninteresting village, but you decide to follow anyway. Maybe something interesting will happen. Just as you arrive the entrance to the town, you meet another large crowd coming out. Two crowds moving in opposite directions on the same road. One crowd is filled with hope as they follow Jesus. The other crowd is weeping and wailing as they carry the dead body of a widow's son.



Luke 7:13, "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." "Don't cry." Why not? What else could she do? She was already a widow. And she had only one son. And now, her son was dead. She was alone, and on top of that sorrow, with no husband or son to work, she was probably left destitute. Words alone are not much comfort to a woman in her situation. But the Good News of Jesus is more than words; it is resurrection power.

Jesus had compassion on the woman. **Luke 7:14-15, "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."** Words were not enough to comfort the widow whose son had died; she needed a resurrection, and Jesus gave her what she needed.

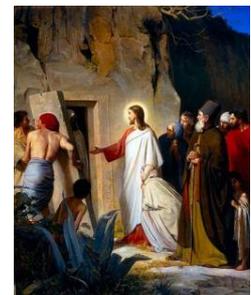
This passage reminds me of **John 1:1-4, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men."** Jesus is the Word and in Him is life. And with a word, Jesus raised the widow's son.

Luke 7:16, "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."" The crowd rejoiced and praised God. But I am sure that the joy of the woman was greater than the joy of the whole crowd put together. In that place, no one doubted that a wonderful miracle had just happened. They were there. They saw it.



But what do you think happened when they went home and told their families and their neighbors? It is likely, that many of those who heard the story later doubted. Some probably thought the disciples had made up the story. Others probably wondered whether maybe the young man wasn't really dead. Months later, perhaps, even some of the people who were there on that day began to wonder if it had really been a resurrection.

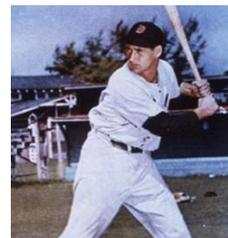
The miracle of Lazarus' resurrection answers the doubters. Before raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus declared in **John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies."** The young man at Nain had just died; he was being carried out for burial. But Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. When someone has been in the tomb for four days, you can't say that they just fainted; they are definitely dead. Lazarus's sister knew this very well; she almost argued with Jesus. **John 11:39, "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."**



These days, when someone dies, we ice the body, and rush to the crematorium. But in Jesus' day people knew the decay that comes after death. Martha knew that if the grave was opened there would be a very bad smell. But Jesus doesn't care about that; Jesus has bigger plans. The stone is removed and then Jesus' prayed. **John 11:43, "When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"**" And Lazarus came out, alive!

The story of the son of the widow of Nain and the story of Lazarus, are just two of the resurrection stories in Scripture, there are more. These stories prove the power of Jesus over life and death and give us good reason to believe the promises of resurrection that God has given us in Scripture. But there is also something lacking in these resurrection stories, Lazarus and the widow's son died again later on.

By the way, how many people know Ted Williams? Ted Williams played 21 seasons with the Boston Red Sox and had a career total of 521 home runs. But does anyone remember what happened to Ted in the end? Ted Williams died of a heart attack on July 5th, 2002. And then a strange thing happened. Ted's son produced a document that showed there was a family agreement, *"to be put into biostasis after we die to be able to be together in the future, even if it is only a chance."*



Ted Williams body was frozen in liquid nitrogen at the Alcor Life Extension Foundation. The theory is that someday science will advance so far that they will be able to unfreeze the body and bring it back to life again. Personally, I don't think that will ever happen, but even if it did, Ted Williams would eventually die again of some other cause.



Life is fleeting. People don't want to face death. In movies, books, and even in technology, we see how people long for eternal life. This isn't a new thing; it goes way back. Consider the pyramids – even in ancient Egypt, it was eternal life that people were longing for when they embalmed the pharaohs and built the pyramids as their graves. In fact, when you think about it, the Alcor liquid nitrogen tank is really just a modern pyramid, another example of the quest of the rich to live forever. But the problem of death cannot be solved by technology, even at its best, technology provides only a short delay of the inevitable, and often all you get from technology is a false sense of hope.



There is a better answer. **1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."** Death may be unavoidable, but if you are in Christ, eternal life is equally certain. **1 Corinthians 15:35, "But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?""** Paul answered this question in **1 Corinthians 15:42-44, "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."**

Lazarus and the widow's son were restored to life; but Jesus did not give them resurrection bodies at that time. The resurrection body is imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. This eternal resurrection is what Jesus demonstrated when He came out of the tomb. The resurrection of Jesus was very different than the resurrection of Lazarus and the widow's son. Jesus rose from the grave and is alive forevermore. Jesus rose from the dead with a resurrection body, imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual - a body fit for eternal life.



IV. Conclusion

When I die, I don't want a pyramid or a liquid nitrogen tank. I don't even want a Lazarus resurrection. God has promised me something far better; God has promised me a resurrection body and I don't want to settle for anything less. And, I bet you feel the same way. We don't want to live forever in a tired and weak body that gets sick and wears out. We want a resurrection body, imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual - a body given by God for eternal life. And the Lord has promised this for all who trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. **Philippians 3:20-21** says, **"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."** Amen! Praise the Lord! Let's pray.

V. Closing Prayer