

When we look at the life of Jesus over his three years of ministry we see him performing numerous signs and wonders. The deaf and dumb are healed. Those who are sick are restored, patients of leprosy are cured, people who are demon possessed are released and the dead are raised to life. If one is an observer of all these events then the key question that arises is, 'Who is this man?' Luke the gospel writer shows us through his record that, "The works of Jesus are signs of his being Christ." For our meditation this morning we will be looking at Luke chapter 7. In the first part of this chapter we see the Centurion's faith and the healing of his servant. Jesus is full of praise for the faith of the centurion. After this incident Jesus and his disciples moved towards a town called Nain. It is a town in Southern Galilee and was about 25 kilometers from Capernaum. Jesus and his followers are heading towards this town.

As Jesus approached the gate of the town, a man who died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son and she was a widow and with her was a large crowd from the town. The gate of the town was usually a defensive fortification but since this was a small town the entrance would probably have been decorative. Luke records several details for us: firstly that the man who died was a young man; secondly, that his mother was a widow which would have been indicated by the clothes that she wore or by the absence of her husband in the funeral procession. Luke also tells that a large crowd from the town was part of the procession. Burials were usually done outside the city as the family cemeteries used to be situated there. The Way of Life now encounters the way of death. Luke has already told us that this young man was the only source of the widow's sustenance and now he too was dead. There is deep pathos painted in this scene. The whole town moans with the widow and that is the scene which greets Jesus as he enters Nain. What would have been the reaction of Jesus when he saw the young man on the bier with the entire multitude following him? Perhaps we may think that Jesus would have felt sorry and stood by the road and paid homage till the body passed by. However that is not what Jesus did. He saw the broken mother, a widow in a tragic situation. He was moved with compassion and he takes the initiative and addresses the widow saying, "Do not weep." Jesus then came forward and touched the bier and the pall bearers immediately stood still. Touching a dead body would normally be considered as making a person ritually unclean. But Jesus did not worry about that instead he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak and Jesus gave him to his mother. The address to the young man was direct and it would have been humorous or tragic if we were not dealing with Jesus the Messiah, the uniquely empowered man of God. Jesus shows through this miracle that he is the author of life and has power over death and life. Many a time we go through situations which are like death to us. Our situations may seem to be irreversible and probably we have given up hope. It may be a relationship between a husband and wife or between parents and children or between brother and sister. In these death like situations Jesus can bring life. It could also be situations with regards to our job or further study which seem irreversible but Jesus can change all of that into life giving situations.

What are the reactions of the people as they witness this young man being raised to life? The first reaction is one of fear because they had never seen such great power being displayed before them so they glorified God saying, "a great prophet has risen among us." The word "great prophet" probably refers to Elijah and Elisha who raised people from the dead. But Jesus is more than a prophet. The people also respond by saying the God has looked favorably on his people. God has graciously utilized his power on their behalf. This section concludes with the question, 'Yes he is a great prophet but is he the messiah?' The answer is found in the following verses. The disciples of John who witnessed these miracles reported it to John. So John sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus, 'Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another?' The two disciples witnessed many miracles that Jesus was doing and so Jesus tells them to go back and report what they saw: 'The blind received their sight, the lame walk, the people affected by leprosy were cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised back to life. The poor have good news brought to them and blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

Jesus clearly shows by his words and his works that he is indeed the Messiah and the word made flesh. We are called to respond to the signs that he has shown us and put our trust in him as our Lord and Saviour.