



When Love comes to Town

Close Encounters With Jesus

HomeGroups@West

Rewriting the Story: Session 3

Luke 7: 11-17 Jesus Raises a widow's son

Come inside the story, walk in the crowd a few paces behind the bier, on a hot day in Galilee, with the bright sun sparkling on the tears which are streaming down everyone's cheeks. Death is common enough, and everybody knows what to do.

The professional mourners and wailers are there, making plenty of noise so that friends and relatives, and particularly the poor mother, can cry their hearts out without the embarrassment of making a scene all by themselves. People with spices, coming to anoint the body, to wrap them up in the grave-clothes & offset the smell of decomposition. You make your way from the family home, through the streets, to the town gate. A death in a small Middle-Eastern community touches everyone.

The family burial plot will be a little way outside the town: probably a small cave in the side of a hill, where the husband and father had been buried some time before, and where now his bones, folded with care and devotion, lie stored in a bone-box, leaving the main shelf clear for the next burial. That's where the procession is going.

Then, quite suddenly, some strangers arrive. **Love comes to town.**

A man leading a small group of followers. He seems familiar: Galilee isn't massive, and perhaps he grew up in a neighbouring village (Nain & Nazareth are 6km apart).

He is looking at the doubly bereaved mother, and something inside him seems to be stirring. He comes up and says something to her – and then, to everyone's surprise and horror, he touches the bier. (Nobody would normally do that except the official bearers; touching a corpse or the bier, or even the bearers themselves, would make you unclean.) Then – the biggest shock of all – he's telling the lad to get up . . . and he's getting up. The whole funeral procession goes wild with astonishment, delight, disbelief. They don't know who to look at, the no-longer-dead boy, his ecstatic mother, or this stranger who has done what the old prophets, Elijah and Elisha, used to do. (Luke has told the story with deliberate echoes of 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 4.)

'God has visited his people,' they say: not in the sense of paying them a social visit, but in the old biblical sense, where this phrase was used to refer to God 'visiting' Israel like at the time of the Exodus. It means, '**God has come near to us, to save and rescue us.**' It means, 'This is the time we've been waiting for.'

IMMANUEL
GOD WITH US



1. How is the story of this family and this community rewritten when Jesus steps into the scene?
2. When Luke records this incident why does he plant the connection with Elijah and Elisha into the listener's thinking?
3. Why is this particular sign that Jesus gives so incredibly significant for his followers at the time and for us today?



4. Share stories of people who have had their life story completely rewritten after a close encounter with Jesus.

5. When have you experienced Jesus rewriting part of your story?

The ultimate truth that we see here is Jesus' power over death itself. The resurrection power of Jesus- son of the Living God- is the foundation for the life and death defining hope of the Gospel: **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. (read and remind yourselves).**

There is a wonderful significance in Luke's recording of how Jesus takes the initiative: **When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion.**

"Don't cry!" he said. As his disciples, this is his heart for each of us. Rejoice!

But as his disciples, this is also the heart that he models for us in response to others.



Pray for those who are needing Jesus' touch in seasons of loss.

Pray and plan how we can follow in Jesus' footsteps and that we would increasingly have 'hearts that overflow with compassion'.