

WIDOWS OF THE BIBLE

WIDOW OF NAIN: LESSON FIVE

by Sandy Harber

"And when the Lord saw her he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." Luke 7:13

Jesus had walked all day, a journey of 25 miles, accompanied by His disciples and a large crowd of followers, to arrive at the village of Nain in time to meet a funeral procession exiting through the town gate. At the head of the procession walked the mother of the deceased, loudly wailing. She had lost her only son, perhaps her only family. The tears flowed. Her grief was apparent. The villagers, walking behind her, raised their own voices in lamentation. It was a sad day for the small town. A day of mourning.

Jesus looked at the mother and had "compassion" on her. Literally, "compassion" means "to have sympathy for" or "pity on" someone. I prefer this definition of compassion: your pain in my heart. God the Son in His humanity felt the widow's pain in His Own heart.

Jesus had know before He started on this trip that it would take Him to this moment. Why else had He come to this small village that He would never visit again? He knew there would be a grieving mother at the end of the road. As He stood before her, He felt her anguish. This was why He had come. To bring joy back into the lives of a widow and her friends and neighbors.

The funeral procession came to a halt. Jesus had committed a serious breach of Jewish law and custom by interrupting its progress. The crowd accompanying the bier were startled. The disciples and the crowd following Jesus were confused. What was Jesus doing?

He spoke directly to the widow. "Weep not," He said. The Greek language specifies that this was not silent weeping but loud and forceful wailing. The anguish of a grieving mother over the loss of her only son. Here Jesus was saying, "Don't continue weeping."

Jesus would say the same thing to the friends and neighbors of Jairus when they crowded into his house, bewailing the death of his only child. "Weep not," Jesus would tell them, "she is not dead but sleepeth" (Lk. 8:52). He would then awaken the daughter from her "sleep," a term sometimes used to describe the death of a believer because it implied the condition was temporary and there would be an awakening. In the case of Jairus' daughter that awakening was physical and immediate (Lk. 8:54-55).

From their behavior it is apparent that the Jewish people believed that they were honoring the dead by loudly lamenting their passing. Thus those who could afford it paid professional mourners to add their voices to the din. The greater the noise the greater the deceased was loved and would be missed, they thought.

For Jesus to tell the mother to stop weeping for her dead son would have been a shock. There's no indication that the widow knew Who it was that stood before her. She did not know what He was about to do. He had interrupted her son's burial. He wanted her to stop her public grieving. He stood at the head of a multitude of strangers who were blocking their way to the cemetery. She didn't understand what was happening.

We do not always understand why God does the things that He does. We may not understand why He tells us to do or not do something. Understanding is not the key to a successful Christian walk. Trust is. God wants us to trust Him in all things.

Trusting God is easier if we remember the compassion of Christ. Jesus felt the widow's pain. He feels mine, too. And yours. When He allows bad things into our lives we need to remember that He feels our pain. Whatever He allows to happen is for our ultimate benefit. Jesus said, "stop weeping" just before He altered the situation so that there was no longer a reason for tears. Trust in His compassion.

"For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15