

**“Young man, I say unto you, ARISE!”**

*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

**Once upon any time** ...a movie director could hardly have created a more dramatic scene than the one I just read to you from the Gospel of St. Luke. Note how Luke carefully sets the stage:

**“Jesus journeyed to a city called Nain... and a large crowd accompanied him. It happened, as he was entering the gate of the town... that a dead man was being carried out for burial, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a considerable number of town’s people were with her, also. When the Lord saw her, he felt sorry for her and said, ‘Do not cry.’ He went up to the bearers and the bearers stood still....”**

*To truly appreciate this scene, imagine if you would...that we were in a helicopter. As we look down, we see a small town with a wall around it. Inside the walled-town, we see a crowd of people, dressed in black, walking toward the main gate. Outside the town, we see another crowd, laughing and talking, approaching the same gate. A few minutes pass and both groups meet at the gate and come to a halt.*

*Next, the ‘dramatic’ begins to unfold. Out of the latter group, Jesus steps forward. He says something to the widowed-mother. He walks over to the litter on which the dead boy lies. Taking the boy by the hand, he says:*

**“Young man, I say unto you, ARISE!”**

*A deathly silence falls across both crowds. Then, a loud, collective gasp goes up from everyone, as the boy begins to move, sits up... and Jesus gives him back to his mother. Luke ends his account with:*

**“And everyone was filled with awe and praised God saying, ‘A great prophet has appeared among us. God has visited his people!’ And this opinion of Jesus spread throughout Judea & over the countryside.”**

*Now, while we are still ‘imagining,’ imagine that this scene fades and another one takes its place. It is nightfall and we are inside the town of Nain that same day. The public square is jammed with people celebrating and talking about the miracle. One old man says to another:*

**“How do you explain what happened? Why did Jesus work this miracle...because he pitied the widow?”**

*The other man pauses a moment and says:*

**“No! I think there’s more to it. I think we’ve got to see this miracle alongside the other miracles of Jesus: restoring health to the sick, sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf. Remember what the prophet Isaiah said: ‘Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf will be cleared; then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the dumb will sing.’ <sup>Is.35:5-6</sup> I think Jesus’ miracle today is another sign that the kingdom of God has arrived and that Jesus is the promised Messiah!”**

\*\*\*\*\*

*This brings us back to this church today. How should we interpret that miracle 20+ centuries later?*

**‘What is Jesus saying to us through it?’—you ask. Well, I am glad you asked that question!**

**Once upon a time**, a missionary priest was pastor of 11,000 Salvadoran refugees, held captive in a Honduras camp. Most of his parishioners were women, children, and old people. They were virtual prisoners, as the camp was surrounded by soldiers, who kept them locked in so they could not flee to freedom—to places like the United States. Here is an excerpt from the priest's diary. It reads:

**“While I was in Campamento 5, I saw many women in the chapel praying. I entered and sat down. About 80 women were saying the Stations of the Cross. Every station identified the suffering of Jesus with the refugees. The women told me how they called their group, ‘Mothers who have lost children due to the violence in El Salvador.’ ”**

As the priest talked with the women, he saw in their faces the same pain that Jesus saw in the face of the widow of Nain. With all his heart, the missionary wanted to restore life to their dead sons. **BUT**...he was NOT Jesus.

Then he realized something. He realized Jesus was present in that chapel, as truly as he was present in Nain 2,000 years ago. He realized that Jesus was working a miracle in that chapel that was even greater than the one he worked in the village of Nain. Through the prayers of these widows, Jesus was giving their sons, not just a physical life that would last another 30 or 40 years. He was giving them an **eternal life** that would last forever!

**“This is the will of my Father,”** Jesus said, **“that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life and I shall raise him on the last day.”** Jn.6:40

So, to answer the question, Jesus wants us to see the miracle at Nain, not just as a sign of his compassion—which it is, not just that it is a sign that he is the Messiah—which he is, **BUT**, also...  
as a sign of what he will do for us...if we believe in him!

He will raise us up, not just to a new physical life, **BUT**—to an eternal life that will last forever.

I close with this prayer:

**Hands of Jesus—you touched the eyes of the blind and gave them physical sight.**

**Touch our eyes and give us eternal sight.**

**Hands of Jesus—you touched the ears of the deaf and gave them physical hearing.**

**Touch our ears and give us eternal hearing.**

**Hands of Jesus—you touched the hand of the boy and gave him physical life.**

**Touch us and give us eternal life! Amen.**

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.