

Women, Grief, and Jesus

By: Mary Lambrecht, M.S. LMFT

In the Gospel of Luke, chapter 7: 11-17, a widow is grieving the death of her only son. Research shows that a parent outliving a child is one of the most difficult sorrows to bear. This particular woman had also lost her husband. In ancient history, a widow relied on her sons to provide for her, so not only was this woman grieving, but she most likely was also filled with anxiety about her financial future. This is complex grief. However, while her dead son was being carried out in the midst of a large crowd, Jesus and his disciples came upon them. Reflecting on Jesus' reaction to the woman and also to her son, can bring us comfort, hope and guidance in times of grief:

1. In spite of the large crowd, Jesus *saw* the woman. We can expect Jesus to *individually notice us* when we are hurting.
2. Jesus *had compassion* on the woman. He told her not to weep. We can expect the Lord's compassion to surpass the depth of our pain. Also see John 11: 33-36, where Jesus weeps over the death of Lazarus, Mary and Martha's brother.
3. Jesus asks the young man to rise up, "*and he presented him to his mother.*" Grief robs and steals, but Jesus *gives back to us*. When Jesus walked the earth, He sometimes gave back through raising the dead person to life again. Though this is obviously not the norm for modern day Christians, we can nonetheless expect that Jesus will fill the emptiness that loss brings, with *life giving purpose*.

No doubt many in this "large crowd" attempted to comfort this woman. But Luke only makes specific mention of the compassion of Jesus. When our hearts are grieving, turning to Jesus for comfort will help us not to put unrealistic expectations on others' ability to soothe us.

When my mother lost my brother, her only son, we had our own personal, loving "crowd of people" that surrounded us. But we soon realized that no human being could possibly understand the many complex layers of emotional, mental, and physical cues that could suddenly catch us unawares and overwhelm us. Sometimes calling on the name of Jesus with every breath...simply because maybe that's all we have strength to do...to just breathe...is one way to allow the depth of Christ's compassion to fill every moment. As Jesus' love begins to fill the emptiness left by loss, strength and purpose for living will slowly return.

Jesus' reaction to the boy and the boy's response, is also noteworthy. Jesus asked the boy to "arise" (vs. 14). The story continues with "*so he who was dead sat up and began to speak.*" There is a time, when as grieving women, we need to trust that Jesus' deep compassion for our loss is enough to help us "arise" and move forward once again. Jesus wants to give life back to us. *How* this life will look will be different for every woman, and Jesus will lovingly help us take those first, faltering, forward steps.

Perhaps there are some women reading this to whom Jesus is calling to “arise” out of a piece of their grief, and receive a piece of life from Jesus. But others may simply need Jesus to notice them, to draw them out from the crowd, to fill them with His compassion. As women, whatever your need in your loss may be, Jesus is deeply moved by it. Like this widow with her only son, He sees you, He has compassion on you, and over time, He will restore life back to you.

Compliments of Practical Family Living, Inc.

P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute our articles in any format provided that you credit the author, no modifications are made, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you include Practical Family Living’s web-site address (<http://www.pfl.org>) on the copied resource. Quotations from any article are also permitted with credit to the author and citing the web-site. Any use of other materials on this web-site, including reproduction, modification, distribution or republication, without the prior written consent of Practical Family Living, Inc., is strictly prohibited.