

JJ<sup>1</sup>

It's a terrible scene we've all seen before. The long train of cars following a hearse on the highway. It makes us stop in our cars to stop and remember all the times we've driven in those caravans. It's the painful procession we've seen if you have ever been in a cemetery when the cars arrive and a family marches to another resting place. Your mind flashes to the times you too have marched in those lines.

That's what we find today. Two large processions of people. One lead by by Life, and the other by death. Jesus' disciples and large crowds of people were following Jesus in expectant joy of what he'd say and do next. They just witnessed him heal a dying man without even being there! But as they approach the village of Nain, they see another large procession of people. That procession is entirely different from their own. It's about as pitiful a scene as could be. A widow is leading her only son to his grave. For this widow it meant great amounts of sorrow and years of poverty lay ahead. What would Jesus do now? What's going to happen **WHEN LIFE AND DEATH COLLIDE?**

Jesus approaches the lonely, grieving widow and says, "Don't cry."

"Don't cry? How can she not! Didn't Jesus cry at Lazarus' tomb? Is it wrong for me to cry?" Of course not! Look at what Luke says. "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her..." He had compassion for her. The word in the Greek is what you feel when you see someone begging for help on a street corner and their situation is real. It's what you feel in your heart when you see your loved one suffering in a hospital bed. It's what you feel in your gut as you watch your loved one gasping for breath as life is slowly slipping away. That is what Jesus feels for this woman. His heart is breaking as he sees his people literally carry the consequences of sin on their shoulders. This is the one who goes to her and says, "Don't cry."

When Jesus says, "Don't cry," it's not like our powerless words. When Jesus orders an end to tears there is actually something behind those words. There are promises beyond imagination. There is the power to stop a heart, or to make it beat again. "There is a look on his face that would be outrageous on any other: 'I can fix this!' " (paraphrase and quotation from: Paustian, *More Prepared To Answer*, p. 121, NPH 2004)

Then Jesus does another shocking thing. He does the forbidden and unclean. He

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<sup>1</sup> JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

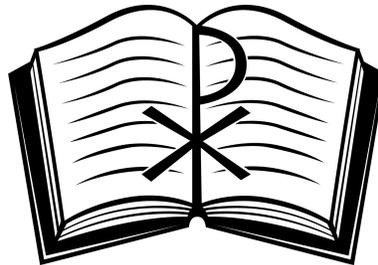
grabs hold of the stretcher, carrying the body of the lifeless young man. The pall bearers stop in their tracks. Life and death are about to collide. And O, how we long to meet Jesus in our own funeral processions and hear him say these eight words. “Young man, I say to you, get up!”

If telling a grieving widow, “Don’t cry” seemed absurd, how much more these words! But again, remember who speaks. It is the One who with a word, created all that you see. It is the One who gives you life and breath, and also takes it away. He is Life, and when Life and death collided on the cross, Life won. Oh, yes, death held him for three short days, but **WHEN LIFE & DEATH COLLIDE**, Life wins.

The young man sits up and begins to talk, and Jesus gives the young man back to his mother. His words that dry eyes now also show the reason why they dry eyes. The people respond with hearts of faith: “A great prophet has appeared among us!” They recognize him as the prophet Moses said would come. They declare, “God has come to help his people!” God came and visited his people with his mercy and grace.

Dear friends, this is the same loving God who comes and visits you with his love, especially in those dark days. When grim death assails us, whether in our own bodies or that of our loved ones, Jesus our Lord is there. He calms us, saying, “Don’t cry. I came on a headlong course to collide with death. I came to conquer death. And I have won. I have shattered the gates of hell and burst open the door to heaven! Because I live, you also will live!”

And dear friends, because Jesus says this to you now, you will also hear him say to you, “Young man, I say to you, RISE!” Amen.



SDG<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

