

Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

Luke 7:11-35

Sunday Class (2/9/25)

Today we see Jesus showing divine power in perhaps the most dramatic way of all, but we still see that people are unsure what to believe about him.

What exactly is Jesus' relationship to God? Is he a messenger from God? A human endowed with special powers? Or is Jesus truly God? Is he really God in human flesh?



Let's look at two sections of Luke's gospel, that help continue to show how Jesus' divinity was made manifest and evident to the people of his day.

Have you ever attended a funeral, and experienced something unusual or different? Today we read about something extremely unusual happening at a funeral service. A young man dies, and the burial is taking place almost immediately, as is the custom. The young man's body is wrapped in a cloth, most likely, and carried on a board or a platform in a procession to the burial site. Let's read what happens: Luke 7:11-17.

What strikes you when you read this story? What caught your attention?

What details impressed you, in Luke's telling of the story? Luke's eye for details draws the hearer into the emotional involvement of the story, and highlights the significance of the miracle.

What made the death of this particular man all the more poignant and troubling?

Do you imagine that anyone imagined, when Jesus and the funeral procession met, that he would bring the dead person back to life?

What would you expect would have been the thoughts going through the minds of the people in the funeral procession as this story unfolded, at each of the following points?

- Walking in procession to the burial site
- Procession stops as Jesus approaches and talks to mother
- Jesus touches bier
- Jesus says, "Young man, ..."
- Dead man gets up
- People around you praising God, saying "God has visited his people"

What would you expect to have been the reactions and feelings of the mother as the story unfolded?

- Walking in procession to the burial site
- Procession stops as Jesus approaches and talks to mother

- Jesus touches bier
- Jesus says, “Young man, ...”
- Dead man gets up
- People around you praising God, saying “God has visited his people”

What do you think of Jesus’ caring, compassionate response, described in v. 13? What might have been going through his mind?

Notice Jesus’ reactions of “compassion” (13) –the original Greek word is very graphic, signifying a *complete outpouring of the inward parts*. In other words, Jesus was deeply moved by this situation.

Sometimes we find ourselves moved by someone’s suffering, and we long to do something to help, but don’t know what to do or say. At such times, perhaps just a simple touch, or a listening ear, or a simple expression of concern, is the best we can offer – and what might be what’s most needed at that moment.

Why do you think he took the moment to tell the woman, “Do not weep” (13)? Why not just do the miracle, and know that her tears would turn to rejoicing?

When Luke notes that Jesus “touched the bier” (14), this action made Jesus ritually unclean, according to the OT ceremonial law; but instead of being defiled, Jesus provides the ultimate cleansing and healing.

Why does Jesus talk to the dead man as if he is alive (v. 14)?

Was it the word of Jesus caused this great miracle? God’s Word has power!

In v. 15, it says that the dead (formerly) man sat up and “began to speak.” What do you imagine he had to say?

If you were the mother, what would have been the first thing you’d have said to your resurrected son? If you were the son’s best friend, what might have been the first question you’d have asked him that day?

What do you think the people meant by calling Jesus “a great prophet” (16)? What did they mean by “God has visited his people” (16)? Do they understand yet that this same prophet must be crucified and be raised on the third day?

Perhaps the people had in mind the famous Old Testament stories or resurrections, when they witnessed Jesus’ miracle. Read 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:8-37). Might these stories have influenced their comments about Jesus?

How might the Pharisees and temple leaders have reacted, when they heard about Jesus bringing someone back from the dead? Do you think even this miracle was utterly convincing for his closest disciples, the twelve?

In the next section, we see that even the forerunner, John, is struggling to understand the nature of Jesus' ministry. Jesus isn't exactly the type of Messiah figure that John was expecting (Luke 3:7-9), and so he sends two messengers to Jesus just to make sure.

How would you sum up Jesus' reply to the messengers of John? He uses a collage of OT phrases from Isaiah (35:5-6; 26:19; 29:18-19; 61:1) which refer to the coming period of deliverance. Jesus' ministry signals fulfillment of these prophecies.

Why do you think Jesus' reply closes with the beatitude, calling for faith?

Jesus goes on to raise the question about John for the crowd. Why do you think he wants for them to have clarified understanding about John?

Jesus lauds John as the greatest of all – and yet he says that those who are a part of the kingdom of God are even greater. How do you interpret this saying?

Read 7:31-35. Jesus is clearly comparing the complaining children to this generation (the Jewish objectors). They're like children who refuse to play, complaining that John and Jesus don't dance to their tune.

In the end, would you say that this parable is a rebuke to the leaders? Jesus is saying that they are hardhearted in rejecting God's way.