

Luke 7:11-17

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out - the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still, he said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding county.

Lord God, heavenly Father, you sent your Son to be made of flesh - that by his death he might atone for our sins and deliver us from eternal death. We pray to you: confirm in our hearts the hope that our Lord Jesus Christ, who with but a word raised the widow's son, in like manner will also raise us on the last day and grant eternal life. We ask this through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Ghost, one true God, world without end. Amen

"Children of men, you must die!" Thus God speaks to us and to all people in his Holy Word. If there is any truth in the Holy Scriptures which is universally accepted by all people - then it is this truth. Whether young or old, who dares to deny this truth -

that death comes to all? *“Hearts are but muffled drums beating funeral marches to the grave.”* This world is but one vast funeral possession. The history of every great and every insignificant person has ended with the words: *“And he (or she) died.”* There are countless other things before our eyes that testify to this truth. The spread of disease and sickness, the gray hairs of the aged, here the destroying floods, there the destroying fire, here a tornado, there the destroying lightening, here the heat rays of the burning sun, there the freezing of the north wind – all these things cry out: *“We must die!”*

In spite of this self evident fact, people live here in the valley of the shadow as though they are going to live here forever. And thus the unbeliever and the skeptic, if they do not repent and turn to Christ, are marching to their death with the bands of hell tied around their necks. Why are so many people more concerned over the things of this fleeting life and so little interested (*or not at all*) about their death? Here comes the answer: People do not seriously consider the meaning of these words: **YOU MUST DIE.** When these words are truly considered, the question will naturally follow: *“What must I do to be saved?”*

What do these words mean: *“You Must DIE?”* They mean that you either place all your affections on the things of this world and seek in them your good, your pleasure, your desire, and make your heaven here on earth or throw that aside for Christian belief and practice. For you, death may be just the beginning of life if

you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and rest on his merits. There comes a time when a person must leave the world and everything that is in it, and it makes no difference whether one is a king or magistrate - each will leave the world as naked as when coming into it. But the most terrible thing for the unbeliever will be the eternity in hell where there will be **“weeping and gnashing of teeth”** as found in **Matthew 13:42**. A person may postpone coming to God because earthly possessions stand in the way, but there comes a time which cannot be postponed, and that is the time when one must leave this world.

You are still living in the time of grace and may reject the way of life which lies open to you and travel down the road which leads to eternal damnation. But there comes a time when your time of grace will come to an end, and then the story of eternity will begin. Then there will be no time for repentance and prayers, tears or weeping will not avail. If you stand at this time without God, weeping and gnashing of teeth and eternal punishment will be the terrible history of your eternity. Behold then what these words mean: *“You must die.”*

Do we not then see the great need to be assured time and time again and spend a few minutes of our life preparing for that eternity which God wants us to have, the eternity with him in Heaven? It must be terrible in the face of death to not know those blessed truths which God has revealed to us for our salvation. These truths should have been learned from youth.

What is the right and only comfort in our last need? The gospel lesson for today is given by Christ to assure us of true comfort in death. Let us then consider:

The True and Only Comfort in Death

I – The comfort everyone needs

II – This comfort is not to be found in our works or piety

III – This comfort is to be found in Christ alone

People can place their full trust in Christ

I

Those that are preoccupied with the things of this life, with their business and their friends, may think: *“Later on I will devote more time to God and the church.”* This notion is quite general and it would be true if there were no death. Without death there would be sufficient time for everything. In reality though, people must die and this life is but a few seconds. This life is a time for preparation in which we are to learn the way to eternal life and to learn to walk in a godly manner. This life is but a race to the goal and that goal is heaven. There is a battle for the crown of life which is reserved for us in the other world - heaven.

Were we to spend eternity here in this life, then we might have reason to be concerned about the things of this life. But the things in which a person can trust at the present time will pass away and such things as property, cattle, money, and goods are

placed in our hands are only means to be used in a proper way for the glory of God, for our salvation as well as the salvation of our children.

In the face of death a person cannot place trust and comfort in property and money which were successfully acquired. There is no comfort for eternity to be found in such earthly things.

What then is the comfort and trust which we need? It is nothing else than this: In death we must know if our sins are forgiven, if even the smallest sin is to be held against us by God. It is sin that separates God from every person, and every single one must be removed before one becomes acceptable before God. Therefore In death we must know whether or not we are under the stern justice of a righteous Judge. In death we must know that we will not eternally die, but instead through death be translated to eternal life. We must know that on that last Day our poor bodies will not be delivered to eternal shame, but rather to heavenly glory. In short, in death we must know whether or not hell for us is closed and heaven open. We must know if we will inherit the kingdom of God. It is terrible for those who do not know the answers to these questions.

II

Let us secondly see that the comfort which we need is not to be found in our works and piety.

If everybody could face death in peace and comfort, then we would believe that such comfort could be found in works. On the contrary, many that have led outwardly pious lives in the hour of death are filled with fear that they will not stand righteous before the all Holy God, and instead will be found guilty.

Others again die quietly, trusting in themselves because they have led an upright life from youth and have not committed any big sin. Such people think that they are dying in true comfort - but what a terrible awakening in eternity. We are not told that the rich man died in the throws of great anguish and distress. How terrible it will be for the unbeliever to be in the flames of eternal hell.

Therefore let us not put any trust in the works of any mortal. There is no comfort to be found in a life and death based upon works. For where can a person be found who can say that they have no guilt? One must rather confess: *"We are sinners and have sinned against God many times and in many ways."* We can say with David: **"Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O Lord."** Psalm 25:7 Let us say: *"How can our works and our own piety give us true comfort in death?"* How dare we trust in our best works and place them before God as a sort of offering for sin? These works before God are speckled with our sins and are not acceptable.

III

Thirdly, let us see the true basis upon which our one and only comfort can be found in the Gospel. There we see how hell and death stand still according to God's words. Jesus not only told the sorrowful woman: **"Don't cry." Luke 7:13** - but also dried her tears. In this way he woke the dead boy that was being taken to the grave. It is no one else than Jesus Christ upon whom we are to place all our trust.

There is no better comfort and trust than in Jesus who says: **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." John 11:25-26** Therefore our trust and comfort is not based on something that we have done but that which our Heavenly Father has done for us out of grace and love.

As our substitute bearing our sins, Christ suffered the punishment of sin and entered into death for us. His death is our death; his resurrection our resurrection; and his victory, our victory.

Let us thank God who gives us the victory through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Outside of Christ, God cannot and will not make any person righteous and save them. Whoever comes to God through Christ - he can and will shower grace and mercy. Without Christ, God must deal with the sinner according to his stern justice. Whoever approaches him with Christ will find a

loving and forgiving Father and an overflowing spring of love, grace and mercy.

If you desire in your death's hour to have a true, sure and unshakable comfort and hope - then you must learn to give yourself wholly to Jesus Christ your Savior. But you say: *"Who can give me such a faith? Can anyone here in this life do this?"* Indeed not, no person can give themselves such a faith or by their own reason and strength stand before God. It is a mystery that no one can learn except by God the Holy Ghost. Therefore St. Paul says: **"... no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit." I Corinthians 12:3** Such faith is a gift of God that is worked in us through the Holy Ghost.

Then you will no longer look to yourself and to your works – but rather to God. Pray that the true faith will strengthen and keep you and therefore help you to accept God's gift. Pray with the disciples: **"Increase our faith!" Luke 17:5** This passage means that we are to despair of ourselves and instead search for God's riches and find our faith, comfort, trust, hope and salvation in Jesus alone.

Cling to Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. With Christ we can face the valley of the shadow of death for we know that the Lord our Shepherd is with us. He will lead us to his fold above where there will be no more sorrow, sickness or death but rather joy, happiness and rejoicing. Amen