

## Second Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 7:11-17

Her son was dead, by accident or disease we do not know. His mother didn't care how her son died. The fact was that he was gone. Losing a child in those days wasn't rare. Many children died before adulthood, but this son was grown, a comfort, someone to love and be loved by, and he was dead. The cries of those supporting his mother filled the air as they walked to the cemetery. The number attending imply that the man and his mother were well thought of in the village.

What would happen to her now? A widow, she was dependent upon her son for housing and food, as well as companionship. She would become a beggar if someone did not step in to care for her. Was there a male relative to take her in? We don't know.

Into this scene steps Jesus. He walks to the funeral procession and up to the men carrying the rough coffin or bier. He leans to the widow and says, "Do not weep." If this woman was a believer in the Pharisees' teaching, she knew that her son would be part of the final resurrection, but that did little to lessen the grief of the moment. Jesus then shocked all present when He said to the corpse, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"

Some say that Jesus did this miracle and others to demonstrate that He was the Son of God. Perhaps, but there was a much more human aspect to His work. Over and over again we read in the gospels, "He felt compassion."

How is your compassion doing? When a family of a different race or nationality visits your church, how do you greet them—with suspicion or compassion? When a stranger is in need, what is your compassion score? A few years ago the WWJD bracelets were very popular. We know what Jesus would do. Compassion, forgiveness, and grace were His "trademarks." What are your trademarks? What are your church's?

*Get to know God through His Word this week!*

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

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Luke 7:11-17

1. What tragedy had taken place in the small town of Nain? Besides the emotional implications for the widow what were some of the practical considerations?
2. The tragedy turns to triumph! What do we learn about Jesus from this miracle? What's the tragedy to triumph story for Jesus? For us?
3. What are the extremes of the people's response in verse 16? How might we explain those extremes?
4. What Old Testament prophet had performed a similar miracle (1 Kings 17:17-24)? What made Jesus' miracle even greater than the first?

### For Family Reflection

5. How is Jesus' compassion comforting in our times of sadness? Can you think of a time when Jesus' compassion for you was important to you and your family?
6. The exciting news of Jesus' miracle spread throughout the area. What exciting news do we have for our communities? How can we share that Good News from our homes and from our churches?

## Third Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 7:36-8:3

Not much is known about Simon the Pharisee. Perhaps he believed Jesus was a false teacher and hoped to catch Him in some offense, or he may have just wanted to meet this popular rabbi. Either way, he failed to provide his guest with even the most basic amenities of the time. In Simon's initial meeting with Jesus, he seemed to see Him as an equal...maybe. The woman, the sinner, had an opposite attitude. She saw Jesus as her only hope. Why was there such a difference between the woman and Simon?

Simon felt safe comparing himself to other people. Who could compare to a righteous Pharisee? He obeyed all the religious rules without fail (or so he believed). God must think him an extraordinary person. With that attitude he could easily view others as beneath his achievement; beneath his place in God's eyes. Simon was guilty of spiritual arrogance. He could tell people about God; he could tell God about God, but he couldn't see the reality of his own life.

The woman, on the other hand, compared herself to God's Son and saw her sin. She saw the reality of her life by the light of Jesus and knew that He was her only hope.

We all know some Simons. Sadly, reaching them with Jesus' love is not easy. The effort is often greeted with sarcasm or the accusation that we are hateful Christians.

Our culture prefers many paths to Heaven, but there is just One. Sharing Jesus with a searching sinner is easy, but we are also called to share Jesus with the Simons of the world. Jesus never gave up—even on Simon, as we see in verse 47. Did those words touch Simon's heart? This Pharisee's name, unlike most of Jesus' enemies, has been preserved for us. Perhaps that is so we will know him when we meet one day.

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## Third Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 7:36-8:3

1. What were some of the unusual actions of the woman who came into Simon's house? How did the Pharisee interpret the actions? How did Jesus interpret the actions?
2. What's the point of Jesus' short story (vs. 41-42)? How did the story apply to the woman? How does the story apply to us?
3. What declaration does Jesus make to the woman (vs. 48)? Why was this declaration startling to the audience (vs. 49)? Why was this announcement important for the woman?
4. Was the woman forgiven because of her loving acts (vs. 47)? Why was she forgiven? Can we ever earn forgiveness?

### For Family Reflection

5. Where do you hear the announcement "Your sins are forgiven!?" Why is that good news to us?
6. What women are named in vs. 2-3? Why do you suppose these women are noted among the faithful followers? Who are some of the women in your church that you note as faithful followers? Why is their service important to your family and in your church?

## Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 8:26-39

Demon possession has become quite a topic for the movie crowd. We like to experience the terror of what is considered the myth of a spiritual war between good and evil. After all, these days no one is sure how to define either. As to our lesson this week, some insist that Jesus did not cast out demons, but healed epilepsy. However, Matthew (in chapter 14) describes a boy as an “epileptic.” Matthew also describes instances when Jesus cast out “demons.” Clearly there was a difference between the two in the minds of many of Jesus’ contemporaries.

I have visited with an LCMS missionary who has witnessed victims clearly demon-possessed. He described the supernatural events that had no other explanation. Add to that the witness of Jesus Himself, and the account of His temptation by a very real Satan, and you have a pretty clear idea that there is a spiritual world that vies for control of mankind.

Having said that, what does the incident of the man of Gerasenes say to us? First, the demon recognizes Jesus as the Son of God. The gospels tell us that this happened frequently. Second, the demon had to obey Jesus, even begging Him to send the “legion” into a herd of swine. Third, who but God could control demons? This was a great witness for the Jews.

Jesus’ command to the demons to leave the “demoniac,” had instant results. Jesus’ power over evil was so great that the community feared Jesus and asked Him to leave.

While the Bible’s description of demon possession and the movies’ fictionalizing of it may be frightening, Christians have nothing to fear. Demons cannot possess a believer. They may tempt us, but they cannot control or destroy us. Jesus said in John 10:28, “I give eternal life to them [that’s us], and ... no one will snatch them out of My hand.” Contrary to the claims of the movies, the reality is that Jesus overcomes all evil.

*Get to know God through His Word this week!*

(A message from your Iowa District West Christian Education Committee)

## Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 8:26-39

1. We have a “before and after” story. Describe the man’s appearance and life while he was under the influence of demons? What do we learn about the demons?
2. Describe the man’s appearance and life after Jesus had rescued him from his possession? What do we learn about Jesus?
3. Why would the demon seemingly treat Jesus with respect (vs. 28)?
4. What is Jesus’ direction to the man who wanted to travel with Jesus (vs. 38-39)? What’s the application for our own primary place of witness?

### For Family Reflection

5. Are Satan and his “army” real? Do we need to be afraid of demons? (Read stanza three of “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” LSB #656)
6. The rescued man tells the city what Jesus had done for him. What has Jesus done for you? Who can you tell?

## Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 9:51-62

How often do we excuse ourselves from the difficulties of truly following Jesus? How often do we decide that God doesn't really expect us to make sacrifices for Him if it would be inconvenient? Of course, God doesn't ask us to lay lambs on altars, but He asks us to serve Him in this world. He asks us to love the unlovable, to serve the undeserving, and to stand firm for Christ in all that we say and do. Somehow, we usually find more urgent priorities to occupy our time. Besides, Jesus can't possibly understand how hard it is to get all of our responsibilities accomplished.

Today's passage says, "He [Jesus] resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem." The time had come for Him to endure the death He had chosen, and He would not be swayed from His task.

"Resolutely" tells us that this was not easy for Jesus. As the Son of God, He could have walked away, leaving us condemned and hopeless. After Satan first tempted Jesus, the Bible says that the Evil One withdrew "until a more opportune time" (Luke 4:13). How many more times did Jesus face and defeat Satan's temptations to give it all up? Instead, Jesus chose to continue toward the Cross.

In the second part of today's gospel reading, several people try to excuse themselves from following Jesus for various reasons. While we might be tempted to sympathize with them, their reasons for holding back pale in comparison to Jesus' commitment to His people—the very unlovable rebels making up His people.

How about our excuses for our own lack of commitment to the tasks that God sets before us each day? We cannot be perfect as Jesus was perfect, but as He "resolutely" set His face to do His Father's will, how can we not try to emulate Him?

Doesn't He expect us to follow His will in our lives and serve those around us? Doesn't He call us to remember that He has promised to equip us in all things? He is our Lord and our Strength. He can enable us to reset our priorities and place His will at the top of the list, but He will not force us to love Him more than we love ourselves.

***Join a regular Bible study—it will change your life!***

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## Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 9:51-62

1. What does it mean that Jesus was to be "taken up"? (vs. 51)  
Where was he going to? When? Why?
2. Why did the Samaritans ignore Jesus? What was James' and John's response to that rejection? What was Jesus' response?
3. Three "volunteers" seem to come forward (vs. 57-62). Why are they "ineligible" for kingdom service?
4. What does vs. 58 have to say about Jesus' earthly journey?  
Why wasn't a place "to lay his head" important to Jesus?

### For Family Reflection

5. Do we sometimes have excuses for not following Jesus?  
What might be some of our excuses?
6. Do we sometimes want to get even with others (vs. 54)?  
What can we learn from Jesus about our own desire for justice?