

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE 7:11-17.

This sermon appeared in 1534 under the title: “*A short sermon on the Gospel of Luke 7 chapter, the widow whose son had died, 1534, Dr. Martin Luther.*”

Contents: **The resurrection of the widow’s son, the young man of Nain.**

Luke 7:11-17

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about.

1. This portion of the Gospel teaches us to know the grace, work and power of God in the kingdom of Christ, our Lord, and to praise and thank him, as well as cheerfully to serve and obey him. For this miracle and act of mercy are related in order that we may recognize him as our helper in all times of need; and then, when we acknowledge him as our helper, that we love him, thank him for his benefits, and willingly suffer and endure whatever he allows to befall us, especially since we know with certainty that he does not permit

anything to happen to us in order to destroy us, but only to try our faith, to see whether our trust and refuge securely rest in him, or in something else.

2. It is the nature of flesh and blood always to seek help and comfort from other sources than God, where they should only be sought, and at last, when all other help fails, to come to God for aid; if, indeed, things turn out so well that they do not wholly despair of God, and rush to satan; for many, when no other help avails, give themselves over to the devil. This results from the fact that they do not know God, and think that he has forgotten them, if he permits some small misfortune to happen to them.

3. Overagainst such thoughts, this Gospel presents a picture of how the Lord Jesus Christ acted toward the poor widow in the time of her greatest need, at the death of her son. On earth no greater need can arise than that caused by death, when the world and everything else have an end. In this greatest extremity he helped her, and raised the dead to life, as an example for us who hear it. For this was done not merely for the sake of the widow and her son, but, as St. John 20:31, says: "But these things are done and written, that ye may believe." In this way he impresses upon the hearts of all this and his other miracles performed by the blessed Lord Jesus, as if he meant to say: Behold, now you hear how this widow's son was raised from the dead; let this be preached into your heart, in order that you may accept it, and in this learn what God can and will do, that he can and will help you in all times of need, no matter how great they may be. And if it should happen that your needs should press heavily upon you and you realize that earthly counsel and help are unavailing, that then you do not despair but let this example strengthen your heart, so that you may look to the Lord Jesus for the best that he can give.

4. This was, indeed, no jest in the life of the widow. First, she lost her husband, and then her only son, whom she loved, died. Among those people it was regarded a great misfortune, if parents could not leave a name or children. They regarded this as a great disfavor of God. Hence this widow, who after the death of her husband, placed all her hope and comfort in her only son, must have had great sorrow when her son was torn from her and she had nothing left on earth. Under such circumstances the thoughts were undoubtedly forced upon her: Behold, you are also one of the cursed women to whom God is such an enemy that they must pass from the earth without leaving an offspring. For thus it is written in the Psalms and the Prophets, that God threatens the ungodly, that he will destroy them root and branch, exactly as when one so entirely destroys a tree that neither leaf nor twig remains. This was regarded as the greatest curse and punishment, as may be seen in the lives of many emperors, kings and princes, who were so completely destroyed that nothing is known of them. This has the appearance as if it were the utmost disfavor.

5. Therefore this woman had great sorrow, not only because she had been robbed of her husband and afterwards of her son and thereby the family destroyed before her eyes; but, what seemed far more serious, because she was forced to think: Now I see that God is unfavorable to me and I am cursed; for this punishment has been executed upon me because God in the Psalms and the Prophets has threatened the ungodly to destroy them root and branch. This has happened to me. Therefore the miracle the Lord Jesus wrought in her behalf seemed to her altogether impossible; and if some one had then said to her: Thy son shall live again before your eyes, she would undoubtedly have said: Alas! do not mock me in my deep sorrow. Grant me at least so much that I may bewail my great misery, and do not add to it by your mockery. This would undoubtedly have been her answer, for she was greatly distressed, both by reason of the loss she had sustained as well as on account of her scruples of conscience.

6. But all this is portrayed here in order that we might learn that with God nothing is impossible, whether it be misfortune, calamity, anger, or whatever it may be, and that he sometimes allows misfortune to come upon the good as well as upon the wicked. Yea, that he even permits the ungodly to sit at ease, as in a garden of roses, and meet with success in all their undertakings, while, on the other hand, he appears to the pious as if he were angry with them and unfavorable to them; as, for example, it happened to the godly Job, all whose children were sadly destroyed in one day, who was robbed of his cattle and land, and his body most terribly tormented. He was an innocent man and yet he was compelled to endure a punishment such as no ungodly person had suffered, so that at last even his friends said to him: “You must undoubtedly rest under a great and secret sin, since this has happened to you.” While attempting to comfort him, they added to his misery. But he answered, saying: *“I have done nothing and hence am not an ungodly person, whom God often allows to live in rioting and to go unpunished.”*

7. So also, it was undoubtedly a serious problem to the widow that the Lord our God punishes the good and evil alike. But to the godly this does not come as a mark of God’s anger or disfavor; while to the ungodly it comes truly as a mark of anger, in order that they may be destroyed. For God does not trifle with them, but is truly in earnest. As to the Godfearing, who have not merited punishment, he tries to see if they will remain steadfast. If they endure the test and think: “My God, though thou triest me, yet thou wilt not forsake me,” he will come again and pour out his blessings as richly upon them as he did in the case of Job, who received twice as much as he had lost, both in property and children. The widow found all her joy in her son while he lived. God tried her and took her son from her. When she wept and cried he came again and gave her tenfold more joy than she had had before; for she rejoiced more for her son in that one hour than she had done throughout her

entire previous life. So richly does our Lord God give again, if only men endure and do not doubt him.

8. Therefore learn from this, whoever can learn: If we are pious and the trials come, which God sends upon us, let us cherish the thought that he means it well with us, and let us not be offended when he permits the wicked, the Pope, bishops and all others to do as they please. These think they have deserved this at the hands of our Lord God and try to justify themselves, if punished on account of their sins. But, dear friends, let us freely confess and say: Lord, thou doest right, even though thou dost punish us; for before thee, Lord, we have no right. But we hope that thou wilt punish graciously and in thine own good time cease. If we do thus, all distress will be removed, no matter how impossible help may seem to be.

9. Flesh and blood, when under trial, say, all is lost. For when our Lord God makes an attack, he does it in such a manner that we know not where to turn; and hence, no matter how we think or plan, we can find no way out, but are hemmed in on every side, as Job says, Job 3:23: "As a man, whom the Lord has surrounded with darkness," as when one is in darkness and does not know which way to turn. If the trial does not go thus far it is no real trial. He who in hunger still knows of a supply of gold or grain, is not yet in real darkness; but when one is utterly helpless and without counsel he may be said to be really punished. As the widow's way was so hemmed in on every side that she was compelled to conclude: I am cursed, God is against me; so she was in the midst of darkness, where there was neither a way nor an opening, and knew not where to turn.

10. All this is presented to us as an example, that we may learn to remain steadfast in faith and regard God in no other light than that of a merciful God who, indeed, may permit us to be tempted, as if he were angry with us and were laughing at us with the world; but let us guard ourselves against such laughter and not become terrified at the anger, with which he attacks his people. It may appear as if at times he were on the side of the wicked and persecuted the godly without mercy; yet it does no harm and it depends only upon a glance. But it is a blind and spiritual glance, which we must give with blind eyes, that is, with the eyes of faith, which sees nothing; For faith is invisible. Faith lays hold of things that are not seen and of things that are not matters of experience, Hebrews 11:1.

11. Philosophers have an art that deals with visible things, which can be experienced and comprehended; but a Christian deals with invisible, unsubstantial, spiritual things, that cannot be seen, nor comprehended, so that one can hardly think they are possible. In this state Sarah was with reference to her son. There was nothing but the simple word. Her womb was not fit for that because of her age and her natural condition that she was barren,

and her son Isaac was indeed invisible and as nothing. So this widow, with reference to her son, did not see that he lived, but saw only that he was dead; but Christ knew that he lived and brought the dead son to life, and so made the invisible visible.

12. All this happened, as I have often said, for us to learn to trust our Lord God and believe in him in all our need, and not become terrified when we do not fare well, nor be offended if the wicked prosper. For our Lord God is one who tries, who allows his own to be tried and to suffer, so that they may truly perceive and learn to know that he is a gracious God, even though he at times hides his grace so deeply that it cannot be seen. Afterwards, if men persevere, it is only a matter of a single word and the necessary assistance is rendered; as in this Gospel, only a word was necessary and the dead son was restored to life. By this he desires to show that what is impossible with us, is so easy for him that it requires only one little word: "Arise." It is easily spoken, and yet it has power to restore the dead to life. We should learn to know that he can and will help us out of all our needs.

13. He who desires to be a Christian should be strong in faith and praise God and his Word, and should say: "I will acknowledge, praise and serve that God, and gladly do and suffer what he wills, who can so readily and easily help." Thus, this and other miracles of Christ should serve to comfort us and make us better, and urge us on to believe in him and serve him, as no other god, for no other god manifests himself as our dear Lord Jesus has manifested himself. Therefore, we praise and magnify him daily, and daily bring others to him that they may also do the same. May God continue his help more and more. This is the teaching of the Gospel as presented in the example of the widow.

14. This narrative still further exhibits the true nature of Christ's work, showing why he came and reigns, namely, that he might destroy death and in its stead give life, as the prophet Isaiah, 25:8, says: "He will swallow up death forever;" and St. Paul, 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, says that Christ must reign until he has destroyed the last enemy, death, for his Christians, and thus give them eternal life; after that he shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. This is the work he will accomplish among his people and has already begun in faith before bodily death takes place. Afterwards, however, when he shall have brought all his own together he will complete his work in them at the last day.

15. Signs and types, yea, testimonies of the same are found in this and other narratives, that record the raising of people from the dead. But these form only the prelude to the work he will finally accomplish among all Christians. The pictures of both life and death are here placed over against each other, and it is shown where both originate and oppose each other, and how Christ manifests his power and authority over death.

16. For, first, when you hear the Scriptures speaking of death, you must think not only of the grave and the coffin, and of the horrible manner in which life is separated from the body and how the body is destroyed and brought to naught, but you must think of the cause by which man is brought to death and without which death and that which accompanies it, would be impossible. This cause Scripture points out and teaches, namely, that it is sin and the wrath of God on account of sin. This cause brings death, always sticks in it, appears from it, and works and draws after it all the misery and misfortune on earth, and in addition banishes man from God and from all his grace and joy.

17. Likewise, on the contrary, when the Scriptures speak of life you must also conceive the cause that brings and gives life; that must be the righteousness by which man is acceptable to God and by which he also finds in God his pleasure, delight and joy, and receives thus from God every good thing he may desire through all eternity.

18. Both these things you may see in this picture, two sorts of persons and processions: the deceased with those who carry him out of the town, and Christ who comes to meet him. All men know very well that they must die and that all of us go the same way, and see death before us, by our side and behind us. Even the learned among the heathen have complained of this misery of the human race; but they have not been able to perceive the cause of death. Most of them think death is a matter of chance, that we die like the brute, and that man is so created that he must die.

19. Others, seeing that so much misfortune, misery and sorrow pass over the human race, that so many die before their time and many are miserably destroyed, things which could happen only by chance, have searched for the cause and have been surprised that such misfortunes befall man, who, alone among all living creatures, is the noblest and should be better situated, and guarded against injury, but they have not been able to ascertain the cause of the evil, except in so far that they have seen how many men, through their own malignity or willfulness, have brought death and other misfortunes on themselves. But this in itself is a matter of great wonder how a man can be so wicked that he can willfully cast himself into trouble and misery.

20. Here Scripture teaches us, in the first place, that death originated in paradise, as the result of the eating of the forbidden fruit, that is, from the disobedience of our first parents, and since then has come upon all men on account of their sins. For if sin did not exist, there would be no death. By this we mean not only gross sins, such as adultery, murder, and the like; but they also die who neither commit, nor can commit these, as children in the cradle; yea, even the great and holy Prophets, John the Baptist, all must die.

21. Therefore some greater and different sins than murder and similar public crimes, which the executioner punishes with death, must be meant, why the whole human race is subject to death. This is the sin which we have inherited from Adam and Eve, and from our fathers and mothers, which is innate in all men born according to the common course of nature. This exists and remains, as it did in Adam and Eve, after they had committed sin, had been banished from the presence of God, full of evil lusts and disobedience to God and his will. Hence all under the wrath of God are condemned to death, and must be forever separated from God. In this way God manifests his strong and terrible wrath against all men, which we bring upon us through sin, so that all of us must be overcome by death; because we are born of flesh and blood and in consequence must bear the guilt of our parents, and thus have become sinners and worthy of death. Psalm 90:7 teaches us: “For we are consumed in thine anger, and in thy wrath are we troubled.” It is the wrath of God, he says; hence it is not an accidental thing, or because man has been so created by God; but it is our fault that we commit sin. For since there is wrath, there must also be guilt, which causes such wrath. This wrath is not a mere ordinary thing, but such a serious affair that no one can endure it, and under which all must succumb; and yet the world is so blind that it does not see nor regard this wrath of God; yea, even the pious do not sufficiently comprehend it. The Psalmist says, Psalm 90:11: *“Who knoweth the power of thine anger, and thy wrath according to the fear that is due unto thee?”*

22. Much less can the world understand how one may be freed from all this misery, nor can it accomplish this by its own wisdom and power; even as in its blindness it attempts to do, when it hears of the wrath of God and seeks by its works and life to be reconciled to God and merit life. For since all men are by birth sinners and, under the wrath of God, subject to death, how shall we be able by our own works to free ourselves from death? Alas! when death is considered or how to escape death, there is neither comfort nor hope for any one, as St. Paul says, 1 Thessalonians 4:13: *“That ye sorrow not, even as the rest who have no hope.”*

23. For neither do these know that it is possible for a single individual to be raised from death to life, and hence they conclude: “He who is dead, must remain dead forever and must be annihilated.” Others, as the Jews, Turks, Papists, even though they hear that there is to be a resurrection, are nevertheless ignorant of the fact how they may take part in the resurrection of the righteous and the saved, think that they can merit eternal life by their own efforts; as we monks have hitherto believed and taught: that if we strictly observed the rules of our orders, prayed much, read mass, etc., God would have respect for such a holy life and in consequence help not only us, but others also, to escape death.

24. This, however, is nothing but a vain human comfort and hope, without any authority of the Word of God; for such power and authority to help ourselves cannot exist within us. Since on account of sin we have become subject to death, so that we cannot even delay bodily death, much less can we save ourselves or work ourselves free from eternal death. This we ourselves have been compelled to experience and testify to by our monkery and work-righteousness. For although we have had to do with these for a long time and comforted ourselves with them, yet at last we found them useless. When once the straits of conscience were concerned, when we had to struggle and stand before the judgment of God, all this comfort left the heart and nothing remained but vain terrified doubts, yea, even convulsions and tremblings on account of the thought: Alas! I did not live a sufficiently holy life. How shall I be able to stand before the judgment of God? For it must finally come to this, that man must feel and become conscious of that which all the Saints have experienced and confessed, namely, that no one can stand in the judgment of God on the basis of his own life, no matter how good it may have been. Of this the prophet Isaiah speaks, Isaiah 49:24: "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captives be delivered?" The "mighty" he calls the power of death, that strangles and carries away all men and whom no one can resist or rob of its prey; but by the "lawful captives" he means the law with its judgment, which is God's judgment and which rightly holds all men captive, so that no one can free himself or others from it, but all must, as far as in them be, remain forever captive under it; for they themselves have merited such captivity through sin and disobedience, and have fallen into the righteous and eternal wrath of God.

25. Therefore there is no help from any creature against this. God himself had to have compassion on our misery and to conceive a plan for our deliverance, as he said in the prophecy of Isaiah, 49:25: "Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered." This had to be done by Christ, the Son of God himself, and he therefore became man, that is, took upon himself death and its cause, sin and the wrath of God, in order that he might free us from these and bring us to life and righteousness. For, as by one man both sin and death came upon all of us; so also by one man must victory over death, righteousness and life be given to us, as St. Paul says, Romans 5:17.

26. Therefore this work of life has been accomplished in such a manner that without our effort or work we attain it, just as we became subject to death without our effort and work. And in like manner as we did not bring death upon ourselves, except in so far as we were born of Adam and through the sin of another our flesh and blood became corrupt, so that we also must die; so also can we much less work out and merit redemption from sin and death, that is, righteousness and life, but must be brought to it through the righteousness and life of another one. Therefore, since sin is born in us through Adam and has now

become our own; so also must the righteousness and life of Christ become our own, so that this same power of righteousness and life may work in us, as if it had been born in us through him. For it is in him not only his personal, but an actual and powerful righteousness and life; yea, a fountain that gushes forth and overflows for all who have become partakers of him, in like manner as sin and death have gushed into human nature from Adam. It means, therefore, that now all men can be delivered from sin and death and be made alive, not by nor through their own efforts, but apart from themselves through the righteousness and life of this Lord Jesus Christ, namely, if he touches them with his hand and through his Word imparts to them his work and power to destroy sin and death, and provided they believe his Word.

27. For this reason we are called Christians, that is, righteous, living and holy people, because we have this Lord and have become partakers of him through the faith of his Word and Sacrament, who is the true sin-destroyer and death-devourer (I say of our sin and death, which have strangled and devoured us) by virtue of his own power and authority. He did both these things in his own person, inasmuch as he took upon himself our sin and death. But since he was not only without sin and the guilt of death, but in himself was perfect and eternal righteousness, and sin and death had no hold on him, they were condemned and destroyed by him, and pure righteousness and life presented to us in place of sin and death. For after his victorious death and resurrection he established a kingdom in Christendom, in which he now continually until death and the grave destroys sin in his Christians through forgiveness and the power of his Spirit, and begins life in them through faith, until he can bring them all together on one day, when he will bestow on them perfect righteousness and life, both in body and soul.

28. All this you may see clearly and lovingly presented in this narrative: This youth died, not because he had been a murderer, adulterer or open sinner who had to be punished because of his misdeeds; but before he could have become guilty of sins which those commit who have grown to maturity, and become old, death carried him away only by reason of the sin in which he was born. His mother might well bemoan her own sin, by reason of which she lost her son, who had inherited sin and death from her.

29. But now that he has died, where may counsel or comfort and help be found? Certainly not through the mother's sorrow and tears, which must have been unlimited. If human work and effort could in this case have been of any avail or be meritorious, surely the tears of the widow would have accomplished much more; for they certainly came from a most anxious heart, as of a sorrowing and miserable mother, whose heart was broken by reason of her love for her son, and who would willingly have done and suffered anything, even her own death, in order to have saved her son. And now, that he was dead, she doubtless

cherished the secret wish and longing: Ah! if it could be the will of God that my son might still be alive or could again be restored to life. This was so deeply concealed in her heart, that she could not see it herself, yea, she dared not even think of petitioning the Lord for it, and yet her heart was filled with the thought. If she had been asked and had confessed what her greatest desire was and what she would ask of God, she could have said nothing else than: Alas! what should I desire or ask more on earth than that my son might live. And this is a more earnest and heart-felt prayer than any one can express, for it proceeds from a purely inexpressible longing.

30. And yet this is useless both for her as well as all others, and she must cast it aside and remain in doubt; for had she not sighed, wept and prayed most earnestly before her son died, that she might retain him alive? But since all this was of no avail and her son had died, how much less could she draw hope or comfort from his suffering; she saw clearly that he could not be brought back by sighs and tears. If this were possible, other mothers would have or would still do it.

31. In a word, unbelief fought against her prayer and made it unavailing; and hence contrary to all human thought, hope and effort, her son was restored to her, alone for the reason that the Lord met and had compassion on the poor widow, as the text says, and comforted her not only with friendly words, but also with his power and authority restored her son alive to her; so that she was compelled to say that it was not her merit or that of any human being, but the pure grace and gift of the Lord, and that he was a Lord who is able to do and give “exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think,” as the Epistle for to-day says, Ephesians 3:20. For this is his way that he always manifests himself towards his saints in a wonderful manner, as Psalm 4:3 says, and in their distresses hears, delivers and saves them, not according to their own thoughts, hopes and faith, but according to his own divine and almighty power, when human counsel fails and is despaired of.

32. Behold, how the Lord exhibits his work against death when it comes into his presence, and thereby typifies or indicates for our comfort what he will also do for all his people, when, like this youth, they are seized by death. For here you see two processions or companies meeting each other; the one, the poor widow with the dead youth and the people following him to the grave; the other, Christ and those who went with him into the city. The first picture shows what we are and what we can bring to Christ; for this is the picture of the whole world and the way of man on the earth. There is a crowd all of whom must follow death out of the city, and Christ, when he comes, finds nothing else than that which has to do with death.

33. This is the whole essence of human life on the earth, if we look at it in the proper light. There is nothing but the image and work of death, and constant and daily approaching death until the last day, since one after another dies and the rest have to do only with the horrible affair how one may carry the other to the grave, and others follow daily. They render this service to the dead, in order that to-day or to-morrow some one else may follow them also to their graves. Wherefore Christ speaks of the character and order of our earthly life to those whom he calls into his kingdom, Matthew 8:22: *“Leave the dead to bury their own dead.”*

34. Thus you see on this side and in this crowd of the whole world and of the human race nothing but death. We bring this with us and with it drag ourselves from our mother’s womb, and all at the same time travel the same road with one another, only that one precedes or is carried before the others, and the rest follow after until the last one dies. Nor is there any deliverance or help for this from any creature, for death rules over them all, as St. Paul says, Romans 5:14, and drags all of them along, without the ability to resist. Yea, with such demonstration and pomp does death do this that when he overcomes one he defies all the rest who are alive and carries the dead to the grave, and shows them that he has them also in his clutches and under his power and may seize them whenever he will.

35. But on the other hand, you see here also a comforting counterpart of life, and a glorious and joyous procession of the Lord Jesus, who does not go out of the city with the dead, but meets death on his way into the city; not however as those who return home from the grave, only until they shall carry another one out. For the Lord does not come with such thoughts of death, as if he had to fear death and come under its power; but steps into his presence and opposes him as the one who has power and authority over death; first he comforts the poor widow, whose heart is filled only with death, and tells her to sorrow and weep no more, speaks other words which no one else can utter, steps up to the bier, lays his hands on it, requests the bearers to stand still, and immediately follows with a word and says: “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” These words are instantly followed by such power and efficacy that the dead man did not lie as before, but sat up, bound and covered as he was, began to speak and showed that he was no longer dead, but alive.

36. This was a wonderful and quick change from death to life, on the part of the young man. Where the spark of life had long been extinguished and there was truly no sign of life, there are instantly and fully restored breath, blood, sensibility, movement, thought, speech and everything else that belongs to life; and Christ, with one word, turned the sad and sorrowing procession, and the carrying of the dead from the gate of the city, into a joyous, lovely and beautiful procession of life, in which both the youth, who was being carried by four or more to be buried under ground, together with his sorrowing mother,

joyously follow the Lord Jesus, accompanied by the whole crowd into the city, forgetting death, the bier and the grave, and speaking joyously and thankfully only of life.

37. But the glory and honor of this work belong only to the Lord Jesus, through whose power and authority alone death can be removed and life brought forth from it, as he also proves. Hence the fame and report concerning Christ, of which this Gospel speaks, saying that it went forth throughout the whole country, is recorded for our consolation and joy overagainst the fear and dread of death, in order that we may know what kind of a Savior we have in Christ. For he so manifested himself on earth in his ministry, office and form of a servant, that he can be known as the Lord both of death and life, to destroy the former and bring the latter to light; that although he often met death and fought with it, as in the case of the daughter of Jairus, and again in that of Lazarus, and at last in his own person, he nevertheless finally overcame and destroyed it.

38. Christ also desires to prove in our death and that of all Christians, since death casts every one of us under the ground and it thinks it has completely swallowed all; as Christ promised and confirmed by his own mouth and word in John 11:25: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live." Again, John 5:28 says: "The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Then only the work, which he has portrayed in this example, shall really begin, which he has put off until that time, since he wishes to complete it not only in one or a few, but at one time in all, in order to destroy death with one blow, as Isaiah 25:8 says, so that no one shall forever afterwards be overcome or taken captive by it. This shall then form a truly joyous and glorious procession, when he shall bring together, in a moment of time, all who have died, calling them forth with one word from the earth, dust and ashes, air, water and all other places, and, as St. Paul says, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, will bring with himself, as the Head, in an innumerable company all believers, having freed all from death and given them eternal life, and, as Isaiah 25:8 says, having wiped away all tears from their eyes, so that they may forever and without ceasing praise and glorify their Lord, with everlasting joy, praise and honor.

39. We should also learn to believe this and comfort ourselves in the hour of death and in all other distresses, so that, although we may come to such straits that we neither see nor feel anything else than death and destruction, as in the case of this poor widow, because of her son, yea, even though we may be in the clutches of death, as her son on the bier and on the way to the tomb; yet that we may nevertheless firmly conclude that in Christ we have obtained victory over death and life. For faith in Christ must be so disposed, as the Epistle to the Hebrews 11:1, teaches, that it can grasp and hold fast those things that can not, yea those things of which only the antithesis can be seen, as in this case, Christ wants this

widow to believe in and hope for life, when he says, “Weep not;” although such faith was indeed weak and small in her, as it also is in us, since she and all the world had in their minds feelings and thoughts that despaired of life.

40. For he desires to teach us that also in our experience there is nothing in us or apart from us, except only corruption and death; but from him and in him only life, which shall swallow up both our sin and death. Yea, the more misery and death are in us, the more and the more richly shall we find comfort and life in him, provided we hold fast to him by faith, to which he spurs us on and admonishes us both through his Word and such examples as the one before us. Amen.

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