

Luke 7:11-18

## Aim of lesson

To show Jesus' compassion for a mother, and to show that he had the power to bring the dead back to life.

## Background study

Study Jewish burial customs and the Jewish laws regarding uncleanness.

## Suggested outline of lesson

### Widows in Jesus' day

Introduce the lesson by discussing the care and devotion of mothers towards their children, which is also seen in the animal world. (You may need to be sensitive to the family backgrounds of the children in your class). The bond between the mother and son in this story would be particularly close, since she had neither husband nor other children. The young man must have been her only means of support, and his death would have left her destitute. Compare her situation with that of a widow in our present welfare society.

### Unpacking the story

The funeral procession was moving outside the city to the burial place, accompanied by a crowd of mourners. It was the custom for friends, neighbours and relatives to wail as a sign of sympathy. At the same time Jesus was entering the city, followed by a large crowd, and had to pause and make room for the funeral procession to pass through the gateway. Jesus, ever sensitive and concerned for others, was immediately saddened by the sight of the grieving widow, and felt impelled to comfort her. For a stranger to interrupt the procession would be startling and possibly an embarrassment. The body was being carried on an open bier, not in an enclosed coffin. It was unacceptable for a person to approach a corpse, and the mourners must have wondered what was about to happen as Jesus touched the bier. What did happen would have been beyond their imagining. Jesus had only to speak and the dead man sat up. His words of command held absolute authority. By his action, Jesus had transformed a mother's tears of anguish to tears of joy. The reaction of the spectators was one of awe and belief. A man who could restore life to the dead must have been sent by God.

It might be interesting to contrast today's news media with the way in which people in Jesus' day spread the news by word of mouth.

Should you wish to ask the children to read the account in class, it might be sensible to explain words like 'bier', 'compassion' and 'widow' beforehand.

## Worksheets

The story reads: 'One day Jesus saw a very sad thing. As he was coming into the city, a funeral procession was passing by. A young man had died and his mother was crying. Her husband was already dead and now her only son was dead too. Jesus was very sad to see her so upset. He walked up to the stretcher that the body of the young man was on and looked at him. The people who were following the funeral were quite surprised to see him do this as people didn't usually come close to dead bodies. But when Jesus touched the stretcher and the young man sat up they were absolutely amazed! The mother was overjoyed! Her son who she knew had been dead was alive again and she and all the people who saw this happen knew that Jesus was sent by God.'

### Relevance to the children's lives

(You should know whether any scholar is without a mother. Should this be the case, it would be wise to substitute "parent" for "mother" at this point.)

Jesus gave this man life again, so that he could care for his mother. Can you think of ways in which your mother shows she cares for you? Can you think of ways in which you can show that you care for your mother?

### Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for our parents who care for us. Help us to show how grateful we are, by finding ways of being helpful at home. Amen.

### Memory verse

"Honour your father and your mother" (Matthew 15:4).