



“Help in Your Hurt”
Luke 7:11-17

Idea: The pains and failures of this world are burdens too heavy to be carried by you alone, so thankfully the Lord hurts with you in your suffering and offers help.

Intro: “Suffering is just part of the deal.” This is a statement I heard many years ago as a college student and ministry intern. Neal McClendon made this statement at our student camp as he preached from a passage on the suffering of God’s people and the Lord’s sustaining power. His point was that no one wants to suffer or likes suffering, but it is part of living in a fallen world. You see, the stark reality is that if you live long enough, you will experience suffering on some level. You or a loved-one will battle a serious illness or be diagnosed with cancer. Someone you love will die. Did you know that the American Cancer Society expects 1,918,030 new cancer cases and predicts 609,360 deaths this year? Those numbers are startling, and they just deal with cancer. If we add to them the thousands of marriages that will end in divorce and all the affected children, the effects of war, racism, unemployment, poverty, abuse, corrupt leaders, persecution, disappointments, economic downturns, the effects of aging, sickness, and fear of the unknown, then we can understand why so many people are ravaged with anxiety and overwhelmed with stress.

We live in a world that is filled with pain and suffering. This hurt comes in all shapes and sizes. We recognize its presence; however, we wrestle with why it is present. The Christian life is caught up in the tension between our experience and its apparent conflict with God’s character as claimed in the Bible. Philosophers call this the problem of evil or theodicy. And living in this tension is a great challenge. We know God to be good and sovereign. The Bible depicts Him to be in control of everything in the universe. Nothing happens without His knowledge and will. The Bible also portrays His goodness and benevolence toward humanity. These two aspects of God’s character seem to be at odds with one another in our experience, yet they are not. The Bible makes it clear that sin is the origin of all suffering and not God (Gen 3). It also shows that God in His sovereignty uses suffering for His own purposes to shape history and the character of His people. While believers often have questions about why God is allowing or even causing suffering in their lives, the Bible’s message to us is that learning to trust the Lord is more important than understanding the why.

Do not misunderstand the message of the Bible as one saying, “Be quiet and endure.” Nowhere in Scripture do we find God indifferent or cold toward the pain and suffering that people experience. In fact, we see quite the opposite. This was true in Hagar’s and Ishmael’s experience (Gen 21). It was true of Israel in Egypt (Ex 3:7-10). It was true of Hannah who was barren (1 Sam 1:19). It was equally true for Joseph, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, and so many others. We see that it was also true for a widow who was burying her only child.

Read Luke 7:11-17.

Inquiry: Last week, I pointed out that Luke 7 depicts five scenes that present five different windows by which we are to see who Jesus is. We also see through them how the people involved responded to Jesus. In the first scene, Jesus reacts to faith as the centurion believes on the Lord for the healing of his servant. We learn that faith is an exercise in reality as we rightly see ourselves and rightly see Christ. In this second scene, Jesus is moved with compassion towards a widow who is burying her son. In response the people stand in awe of His marvelous grace.

It has been said that the will of God will not take you where the grace of God cannot keep you. Certainly, the death of a child is one of the greatest agonies possible in this life. The burying of a child is the burying of a part of oneself. It is a period before the end of a sentence and the death of a future. From the human perspective, it is always premature. For this reason, it is a burden that all parents fear. Unfortunately, for a widow in the town of Nain, her worst nightmare had become a reality.

Nain is a town about twenty-five miles from Capernaum. It was a full day's walk from the Sea of Galilee. As Jesus and his entourage entered Nain, they met the funeral procession leaving through the town gate. The man in the coffin had died that morning. He was the only son and child of his widowed mother. This suffering woman had already buried a husband, and now she was burying her only child. The large crowd of mourners in the funeral procession was an ironic contrast to her actual state. Having no husband or son, she was now alone in this world. She no longer had a provider or protector. Tomorrow she would awake by herself, brokenhearted and without the sustaining sounds of her beloved son. It is in this tragic scene that we witness Jesus stepping into her pain.

In juxtaposition to the centurion's situation (7:1-10), this grieving widow does not request Jesus' help. In fact, Luke's description leads us to believe that she did not even notice Jesus' presence until He said, "*Do not weep.*" His words may strike us as odd or even offensive. Who would ever tell a grieving mother not to cry? Well, Jesus could say this because He was about to remedy the situation and heal her broken heart.

In the centurion's pain, we see the need to believe in and on Jesus. In the widow's grief, we see that the pains and failures of this world are burdens too heavy to be carried alone, so thankfully the Lord hurts with you in your suffering and offers help in your hurt.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. – Psalm 46:1

Jesus is and offers help in your hurt. I want you to see four helping actions of Jesus in your hurt.

1. The Lord sees your suffering.

Why did Jesus decide to walk twenty-five miles from Capernaum to Nain? It seems the only reason for this trip was because a man had died and a widow was grieving, having lost everything. Jesus journeyed from Capernaum to Nain because He saw this woman in her hurt (vs. 13).

We find a beautiful picture of this in Genesis 16. God had promised Abram an heir, a son, through whom the nations would be blessed. Years began to pass without the promise being fulfilled, so Abram and Sarai his wife decided to take matters into their own hands. She gave Hagar her servant to Abram as a mistress to bear Abram a son. Hagar became pregnant, which caused Sarai to look on her with contempt. Sarai treated her harshly due to the pregnancy. In response, Hagar fled. God found her in the wilderness by a spring of water. He asked where she had come from and where she was going. She explained the situation to Him, and He instructed her to return and promised to bless her unborn son. In response, Hagar called the name of the LORD, "You are a God of seeing." God saw Hagar in her hurt.

Today, the Lord sees you in your suffering. No matter what your hurt may be, He sees it. He is aware. He knows.

2. The Lord feels your suffering.

Not only did Jesus see the widow's suffering, He felt compassion for her (vs. 13). His heart went out to her in unmitigated compassion. Luke uses the strongest word possible to describe Jesus' pity (σπλαγχνίζομαι). The root word form which this term comes from refers to what is inside (the heart, liver, lungs) or the guts. It describes an emotion that has a physical effect. Jesus felt the widow's pain.

This woman was not the only person for whom Jesus physically felt compassion. Read John 11:1, 5, 11, 17, 21, 32-35.

John uses a different term to describe the emotions Jesus felt. In verse 33, Jesus was “*deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled*” (ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτόν). He was deeply moved, and His convulsing gave way to tears.

These two stories inform us that the Lord is not indifferent or cold toward our suffering. He sees you and I in our hurt and feels our pain. Thankfully, He does more than just see and feel. As wonderful as it is to know that He cares, we need more than sympathy. In our hurt we need more than compassion. We need help, which leads us to the third action.

3. The Lord offers hope in your suffering.

Jesus said, “*Do not weep*” (vs. 13). This was not an instruction telling her to suppress her emotions. How insensitive would that have been! No, Jesus was expressing genuine care and concern for her, while hinting at the miracle He was about to do.

The same was true for Mary and Martha. Read John 11:21-27. Jesus offered words of hope for these sisters who had buried their brother. He was their hope. He is greater than death and the grave. In fact, as “*the resurrection and the life,*” Jesus was stating that He would defeat death and the grave.

Today, you may not be facing death in your pain and suffering. Your situation may be something else, but that does not negate its hurt in your life. These two stories show us that Jesus, no matter the hurt, is enough. He is our hope amid our suffering, but there still is more. There is a final action.

4. The Lord moves in your suffering.

In compassion, Jesus was moved to give a crying mother the only thing that could fix her grief. He gave her son back to her. The Lord saw her pain. He felt her pain. He offered hope in her pain, and then He moved to remove her pain by resurrecting her dead son. He did this by touching the bier or casket. Jesus was more concerned about the suffering of the widow than He was about ceremonial cleanliness. He went to work to help her in her hurt.

Mary and Martha also saw Jesus move in their hurt. Read John 11:38-44.

Today, Jesus is moving in your suffering. He is good, gracious, and sovereign. There are times when He will resurrect what you have lost. Other times, He may choose not to do so, but in all things, we know He is good and working on our behalf.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” – Romans 8:28

Conclusion: “Suffering is just part of the deal.” It is a natural part of living in a fallen world that is under the curse of God. We live in a world that is filled with pain and suffering. This hurt comes in all shapes and sizes.

We recognize its presence, while wrestling with why it exists. The Christian life is caught up in the tension between our experience and its apparent conflict with God's character as claimed in the Bible. The curse on this fallen world in no way negates God's benevolent care for humanity. He is present in our hurt. He is our Help in our hurt. Today, if you are suffering remember that He sees, feels, offers hope, and is moving on your behalf. Be encouraged and comforted by this great truth and picture of love. Look up to Him and receive help in your hurt. Allow God to move in your hurt and use your situation to draw others to His beauty and grace (vs. 16-17).

There is another beautiful picture in this scene. When Jesus called to the dead man in the casket, the widow's son heard His voice. These words remind us that the man, though dead in this world, existed somewhere. God created man in the image of God (Gen 1:27). There is something of the Divine in mankind. Humans are eternal. Death in this world is only the death of the body. The person's spirit lives on. According to the Bible, it will exist in one of two places after death, heaven or hell. The first is eternal life with God through Jesus Christ. The second is eternal death in hell with the devil and his demons in eternal agony for rejecting God. Which destination are you heading towards today? For those who have not yet trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior, there is good news for you.

Good news: God loves you. He created you and desires to know you.

Bad news: You are a sinner in rebellion against your Creator.

Best news: God has done everything necessary to justly deal with your sin and bring forgiveness and restoration to your life. Today, He calls you to turn from your sin and self and turn to Him as Savior and Lord. Do you need to be forgiven?