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Article

A Postcolonial Perspective of the Compassion of Jesus in Luke 7:11-17

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Abstract

This paper presents an exegetical and postcolonial analysis of Luke 7:11–17, focusing on the miracle in which Jesus raises the only son of a widowed mother in the village of Nain. Central to the study is the socio-theological significance of the widow, whose compounded loss underscores the vulnerability of women in ancient patriarchal societies. By examining the cultural implications of widowhood and the social status of women in the Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts, the paper highlights how Jesus' compassionate intervention subverts prevailing power structures and societal expectations. The study delves into the literary and theological dimensions of the Lukan narrative, exploring the worldview, values, and intentions of the author. The symbolic and theological roles of the key characters, the widow, her son, and the two accompanying crowds, are analyzed to uncover deeper layers of meaning within the text. Drawing a parallel to the Old Testament account of the widow of Zarephath in 1 Kings 17, the paper emphasizes the continuity of divine concern for the marginalized, particularly women. The miracle is interpreted as both a manifestation of Jesus' divine authority over life and death and a critique of socio-political systems that perpetuate marginalization. Through a postcolonial lens, the narrative emerges as a liberative text that affirms the dignity and worth of the oppressed. Ultimately, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of Jesus' compassion, not merely as a private sentiment, but as a radical, public, and transformative act of justice and mercy.

Keywords: *Exegesis, Gospel of Luke, Jesus, Nain, Postcolonial*

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Introduction

Death is one of the most tragic experiences a person will go through in life. Everyone, at some point, will experience the dreadful pain of losing someone. This experience prompted a profound question: How did Jesus demonstrate compassion toward those who grieved and felt the weight of great loss?

In the Bible, Jesus is recorded to have raised three people from the dead: Lazarus, the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow from Nain. Among these, the story of the widow from Nain stands out for its unique portrayal of Jesus' deep compassion. This paper seeks to unpack the meaning of this miracle through exegetical analysis and postcolonial interpretation while exploring the narrative's relevance in contemporary times. By examining the literary and historical context, the paper aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Jesus' compassion was personal and transformational.

Understanding Luke and His Gospel

The Gospel of Luke is a carefully structured theological and historical narrative traditionally attributed to Luke, the Apostle Paul's physician and close companion. As both a historian and a theologian, Luke adopts a methodical approach to his writing, stating that he has "carefully investigated everything from the beginning" (Luke 1:3). This reveals his commitment to accuracy and thoroughness in compiling the life and teachings of Jesus.

Luke writes sophisticated Hellenistic, blending Greco-Roman historiographical conventions with Christian theology. His dual role as historian and Christian evangelist enables him to present a historical account of Jesus' life and a compelling narrative of redemption. His Gospel, together with the Acts of the Apostles—often considered a two-part work—offers a comprehensive portrayal of Jesus' ministry, death, resurrection, and the expansion of the early Church.

A physician by profession, Luke demonstrates a deep concern for compassion, healing, and restoration, motifs central to his portrayal of Jesus. He presents Christ not merely as a miracle worker but as Soter (Greek for "Savior" or "Benefactor"), emphasizing Jesus' role as the divine redeemer of all humanity, both Jews and Gentiles (Danker, 1976). His genealogy of Jesus traces back to Adam, underscoring Jesus' connection to all of humankind and highlighting his dual nature as both human and divine (Attridge, n.d.).

Biblical scholars have long debated Luke's underlying purpose. Some suggest he wrote to present Christianity as non-subversive to the Roman Empire, while others believe he aimed to reassure believers concerned about the delay of Jesus' second

coming. A further theory holds that Luke-Acts may have served as a legal defense for Paul during his trial before Caesar (Mauck, 2001). Regardless of these possibilities, a consistent and prevailing theme in Luke's Gospel is the universal offer of salvation and the presentation of Jesus as the Savior

Luke's Gospel is primarily addressed to Gentile believers living in Greek cities under Roman rule, including recent converts and inquirers exploring the Christian faith. This intended audience is evident in Luke's frequent inclusion of non-Jewish characters and his tendency to omit or recontextualize certain Jewish customs. Aware of the political sensitivities of his Gentile readership, Luke frames Jesus' life and teachings in ways that resonate with a Greco-Roman worldview. He emphasizes Jesus' moral authority, compassion, and miraculous power without presenting Him as a political revolutionary. Instead, Luke portrays both Jesus and Paul as law-abiding figures, subtly suggesting that Christianity posed no threat to the civic order. This apologetic tone is consistent throughout the Gospel, aiming to assure politically cautious readers of the faith's legitimacy and peaceful nature.

During the time of Jesus, the exercise of violence was a sign of power and supremacy, while the weak were pushed down to silence. In contrast to the kings, Jesus shows compassion instead. He showed mercy to the widow who had lost her only son by performing a miracle of raising the dead and bringing him back to his mother (Luke 7:11-17). Before that, Jesus also showed the healing miracle performed on the centurion's servant (Luke 7:1-10). In both instances, Jesus manifested his compassion and power. His miracle works have proved that as Prince of Peace, He could conquer even death. He demonstrates that He is stronger than any King who uses terror (Ryle, 2016).

The broader social and political backdrop of Luke's Gospel is one dominated by imperial power, stark class divisions, and systems that marginalize the poor, women, and foreigners. Power was typically enforced through violence, and social value was closely tied to status. Against this backdrop, Jesus emerges as a divine figure who subverts societal norms, not through rebellion but through acts of compassion, healing, and radical inclusion.

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miracles are not mere displays of power, but deeply meaningful responses to human suffering.

Literary Structure of the Story in Nain

The narrative of raising the son of a widow from Nain is divided into the following structures: the map of the story (v.11-12), the miracle (v.13-15), and the message (v.16-17). Luke used the same narrative structure in the previous story in chapter 7, which, according to the outline of Hannah (2018), is part of the authentication of Jesus as the Son of Man (Lk.7:1-8:56).

The miracle story in Nain presents Jesus' compassion for the helpless widow who will face inevitable hardships and sufferings for the remainder of her life. It is also important to note that this story and the mention of the town of Nain are unique to Luke's Gospel. Miracle stories express the different works that God has shown to draw people to Him. In the New Testament, a miracle signifies messianic salvation. This type of narrative fascinates and leads people into a belief where one realizes how God would try to amaze people so that they will be drawn to Him. Faith and truth are expected of the readers in this type of literature. Moreover, when Luke narrates miracles, the texts must be read from the perspective of the first century as signs of the active presence of the divine. Luke's Gospel combines this divine presence into the lives of humans. This is called salvation history (Bovon, 2006). Thus, the story of raising the son of a widow in Nain provides a concrete example of how God made His compassion felt through a miracle.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach that relies on secondary sources to examine the theological, historical, and literary significance of the narrative in Luke 7:11-17, particularly focusing on Jesus' miracle of raising the widow's son at Nain. The study is rooted in a historical-critical methodology, which seeks to interpret the text by considering its original historical, cultural, and religious setting in first-century Palestine. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the passage beyond its surface narrative, recognizing the theological implications embedded within its historical context. The research draws upon a wide range of scholarly commentaries and academic literature to achieve this. Primary sources for theological and literary exegesis include modern biblical commentaries by Fitzmyer, Bock, and Marshall, whose analyses offer in-depth interpretations of the Lucan text based on linguistic, theological, and narrative perspectives. For historical and cultural insights, the study engages with the works of Bovon, Beyer, and Hachlili, who contribute to

understanding the socio-religious customs, burial practices, and communal dynamics of Jewish society during the Second Temple period. The data analysis uses three complementary techniques: narrative, thematic, and comparative analysis. Narrative analysis is used to examine the text's structure, character development, and plot progression, revealing how the story is constructed to emphasize Jesus' authority and compassion. The thematic analysis identifies recurring motifs such as divine intervention, life over death, and compassion for the marginalized, highlighting their theological and ethical significance. Comparative analysis, on the other hand, evaluates interpretations across time and traditions by juxtaposing early commentaries from figures such as Calvin, Bengel, and Lightfoot with contemporary perspectives from scholars like Bock, Fitzmyer, and Ryle.

This comprehensive and multi-dimensional methodology ensures that the passage is interpreted within its literary context and through its enduring theological and historical implications across Christian thought.

Discussions

A Journey to Compassion: Jesus' Intentional Encounter with Grief at the Gate of Nain

The miracle of Jesus raising the widow's son in Luke 7:11-12 is more than just an extraordinary act of divine power. It is a deliberate, compassionate response to the suffering of a marginalized woman, revealing a central theme in the Gospel of Luke: the outreach of Jesus to the forgotten and vulnerable. This passage, though brief, offers deep theological and socio-cultural insights that reflect Jesus' concern for the lowly and his intentional ministry to those in despair.

Luke begins the story by connecting it to the previous miracle—the healing of the centurion's servant in Capernaum. The phrase "soon afterward" (Greek: ἐν τῷ ἑξῆς) serves as a narrative link between the two events, although it does not indicate a precise time interval. Scholars note that this phrase implies a general "afterward" rather than a specific day (Metzger, 2001; Gill, 1999). Jesus, accompanied by his disciples and a large crowd, traveled to the village of Nain, a relatively small and insignificant town located about twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum.

The distance between Capernaum and Nain is significant. Jesus' journey was not accidental; it reflects purpose. After this miracle, He returns to Capernaum (Luke 7:18), which raises an important question: Why travel so far for one act of compassion? The town of Nain is mentioned only once in the Bible, making it unlikely that Jesus simply passed through by chance. Biblical geography tells us that Nain lies on the slope of Jebel el Duhy, a remote and humble location. The name "Nain" means

"lovely," though by the time of the 19th century, it had become a wretched village with only remnants of its past beauty (Cambridge Greek Testament, 1896).

As Jesus approached the town gate, a term likely referring to the main entrance or public meeting place, as there is no archaeological evidence of city walls, he encountered a funeral procession. The dead man was the only son of a widow, and a large group of townspeople accompanied her. The language Luke uses is both descriptive and symbolic. The gate represents a threshold between life and death, despair and hope. The woman, already a widow, had now lost her only son, leaving her economically and socially destitute. In Jewish society, widows relied heavily on their sons for survival. Without a male provider, she faced poverty and social exclusion.

Luke's attention to detail is striking. The term ἐξεκομίζετο (was being carried out) reflects the cultural practice of burying the dead outside the city limits due to ceremonial impurity (Bengel, 1897). Dead bodies, being ceremonially unclean, were not allowed to be buried within the cities (though the kings of David's house were buried in the city of David), and the funeral was usually on the same day as the death (Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, 1871–1878). Amongst the Talmudists, a dead corpse going out is commonly a phrase that is first understood as carrying the corpse out of the court gate (Lightfoot, 1675).

The phrase συνεπορεύοντο (went along with) shows that a significant crowd followed Jesus, while another large crowd supported the grieving widow. The mourning community likely did not include professional mourners or flutists, as the widow may have been too poor to afford them. Still, the presence of many townspeople indicates communal solidarity (Hachilili, 2005).

A postcolonial reading of this text reveals even deeper layers of meaning. The story occurs under Roman occupation, where the imperial elite and local collaborators concentrated economic, political, and religious power. Small towns like Nain, located far from centers of power, were often forgotten places—spaces of subaltern existence. These were villages of peasants, laborers, widows, and the economically vulnerable—people who bore the brunt of systemic oppression but whose stories rarely entered the records of the powerful.

In this context, Jesus' decision to journey to Nain becomes a radical act of solidarity with the oppressed. Rather than remaining in Capernaum, a relatively prosperous hub of ministry activity where officials and centurions were already witnessing miracles, Jesus walked twenty-five miles to a poor village with no strategic or political value. His deliberate movement from the center (Capernaum) to the margins (Nain) subverts colonial and hierarchical logic. Where the empire sees no

value, Jesus sees suffering worth attending to. Where Rome imposes silence, Jesus speaks life.

The widow in the story embodies multiple layers of marginalization: she is a woman without a husband, now without a son, and by extension, without property, identity, or protection. In postcolonial terms, she is the archetypal "Other," rendered invisible by patriarchal and colonial systems. Her grief is communal, yet her future is uncertain. Jesus' action not only restores her son to life but restores her dignity, her place in society, and her hope for survival. It is not simply a miracle but an act of liberation from a system that would otherwise have rendered her powerless and dependent.

Furthermore, the large crowd present with Jesus becomes a witness, not just to power, but to a new kind of kingdom. In contrast to the imperial spectacles of Rome, which displayed strength through conquest and control, Jesus displayed divine authority through compassion and restoration. His "procession" meets a funeral procession, and at the point of collision, death gives way to life. This is a deeply symbolic image of the clash between the empire of death and the kingdom of God.

Luke 7:11-12, read through a postcolonial lens, reveals how Jesus' ministry was spiritual and political in its implications. His presence in Nain disrupts the structures of neglect and invisibility. His compassion for the widow is an act of resistance against a system that would have allowed her to perish unnoticed. By raising her son, Jesus symbolically raises her from the dead as well, reinstating her into a life of dignity and community.

This passage calls modern readers, especially those within systems of privilege, to examine whom they overlook and whom they choose to walk toward. Jesus' footsteps toward Nain are a challenge: to move from the centers of comfort to the margins of suffering and to bring life where others have accepted death.

When Compassion Commands Life:
Jesus' Authority and the Widow's Restoration (Luke 7:13-15)

In continuation of the account in Luke 7:11-17, verses 13–15 bring us to the dramatic center of the narrative: Jesus' compassionate restoration of a young man to life and his mother to dignity. These verses, though few, are rich with theological meaning and pastoral depth. They show Jesus not only as a miracle worker but as one who responds personally and authoritatively to human suffering.

The narrative begins with a gaze—"When the Lord saw her..." (v.13). This act of seeing is not passive observation but a divine perception that leads to action. Luke uses the Greek word σπλαγχνίζομαι (splagchnizomai) to describe Jesus' emotional

response, a verb rooted in σπλάγχνα (splanchna), referring to the inward parts or "bowels," considered in Jewish thought to be the seat of deep compassion and emotional movement. This is not mere sympathy but a gut-wrenching compassion that drives Jesus toward action (Robertson, 1932).

Notably, the widow does not ask Jesus for help. There is no recorded plea for mercy or a miracle. Jesus acts without being asked, suggesting a divine initiative grounded in compassion rather than merit, faith, or ritual correctness. He simply tells her, "Do not weep," or more literally, "Stop weeping." Fitzmyer (1981) notes that such a statement risks being cruel unless the speaker has the power to alter the circumstances causing the grief. Jesus, by uttering these words, implicitly promises restoration, a promise he is fully prepared to fulfill.

In verse 14, Jesus then does the unthinkable: he touches the bier (σορός, Soros), the open coffin. This act is more than symbolic; it is a deliberate violation of ritual purity codes. According to Numbers 19:11,16, touching the dead or objects associated with the dead made a person ritually unclean for seven days. Yet, Jesus touches the bier without hesitation, halting the funeral procession in its tracks. As Coffman (1983–1999) comments, the gesture of touching the bier was a signal for the bearers to stop. More than that, it is a bold move of boundary-crossing love—Jesus places mercy above law, compassion above cleanliness.

This is not the first time Luke records Jesus defying ritual boundaries: he touches a leper (5:13), allows a sinful woman to wash his feet (7:38), and permits the bleeding woman to touch him (8:44). In each case, Jesus does not become unclean; instead, he transmits wholeness, healing, and holiness. In this scene, Jesus faces the final frontier, death, and touches on what death has claimed to reverse its effects.

Then Jesus speaks: "Young man, I say to you, get up!" His disciples and the crowd must have had a moment of suspense and wonder (Johnson, 1891). There is no invocation, no prayer, no appeal to heaven. Unlike prophets such as Elijah or Elisha, who prayed to God when performing miracles, Jesus issued a direct command, indicating that authority over life and death rests within himself. His voice carries divine power. It is by his word alone that the dead rise.

The miracle climaxes in v.15: "The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother." This is not only a resurrection; it is a restoration of the relationship. Luke's phrasing echoes 1 Kings 17:23, where Elijah revives a widow's son and presents him back to her. But here, Jesus surpasses the prophets—not through intercession, but through divine authority.

The young man speaks, evidence of restored life, consciousness, and breath. The silence of death is broken by speech, and likely by joyful weeping. The scene turns

from mourning to celebration. McGarvey & Pendleton (1914) observe that joy, laughter, and tears replace wailing and despair. Importantly, this entire miracle occurs without any mention of the widow's faith. This underscores the sheer gratuity of grace, Jesus acts solely from his own initiative, driven by compassion, not compelled by faith, request, or ritual.

A postcolonial reading enriches this miracle further. This is the part of the narrative where Jesus did the miracle and showed compassion. Luke presented Jesus as someone who speaks of his emotions. It may be interpreted as Jesus calling attention because it is one of the practical effects of his action, but Jesus intends to help the woman in need. The widow's difficulty moves Jesus' compassion.

Luke emphasizes Jesus' compassion when "his heart went out to (v.13)" the widow's condition. Jesus' compassion is driven by the difficulty of the situation that the widow is suffering. Thus, Jesus' compassionate restoration of this widow's son may have meant the difference between persistence and hardship.

The postcolonial analysis of this part will explain the significance of the characters in the miracle: Jesus, the widow, and the widow's son. This leads to the main question: Why did Jesus perform the miracle of raising the widow's dead son as an expression of his compassion?

The dead son of the widow. The dead son was a young man. Although his age was not revealed, we can assume that he was at the age where he is at his fullest potential. He is the last remaining hope for his mother since his father died. When he died, his mother's hope died with him. The son's predicament is like that of many young people today who have wasted their lives on illegal drugs. They have squandered their future and, in the process, quashed their parents' hope. They have contributed to its demise instead of being productive and helping society improve. Jesus has also shown compassion for them. He has seen the link between the son's revival and the mother's survival. Hence, no matter how impossible it is to raise the dead, Jesus has done so in the name of compassion. The revival of the son gives him a new chance to be a productive member of his community, restore his mother's identity, and provide him with an opportunity to carve a new life for himself.

Jesus. When He saw the grieving mother, Jesus told her, "Do not weep". Immediately, he knew the predicament of the widow with the death of her only son. Jesus did not just offer pity; he showed compassion by raising the widow's son. He knew, out of the goodness of his heart, that the only thing that would console the mother and heal her broken heart was the revival of her son. Only Jesus can provide redemption from the goodness of His compassionate heart during great sorrow.

Why is an act of compassion necessary and not just an act of pity? Why did Jesus raise the dead and not just console the mother? In a patriarchal society, a woman has no identity without her husband, father, or son. Raising the dead reinstates the woman's identity as she would have her son again. Looking at a postcolonial perspective, Jesus is not just consoling a mother who lost her child. He is lifting the widow's status by bringing back her son. Today, many represent the widowed mother. She is everyone who has lost everything, either because of death or injustice. The widow represents anyone invisible in our society. They are the marginalized and the oppressed. Just as in the story, Jesus will show every widowed mother compassion even if they do not ask.

*The wido*w. Note the mournful occasion that called forth this miracle: a widowed mother following the corpse of her only son.

The death of the only son of the widow of Nain was a heartbreak recognized as such by the large crowd of sympathizers that accompanied her.

The joyless fate of the widow ought to impel one to pity her, and this was precisely what others had shown her. Jesus, on the other hand, is the only one who can overpower death's nullifying effects and offer the widow absolute comfort that no other person could afford (Bock, 1994). She had lost her husband, and now she was without any male support in a patriarchal society (Karris, 1992). All these stirred Jesus' compassion and rendered the entire story highly vivid, and Jesus' compassion is almost palpable.

The description of the fate of the widow of Nain in Luke 7:12 prepares for her encounter with Jesus as narrated in v.13; he was moved to compassion. Unlike in the preceding pericope, the spontaneity of Jesus' compassion for the widow requires no expression of faith from her or the sympathizers. In Luke 7: 1-10, the episode before the raising of the widow's son, Jesus praised the faith of the centurion in these words: "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith" (v. 9). The raising of the widow's son is unconditional. His action elicits faith through divine praise, which the witnesses proclaimed (Kodell, 1982). In this way, he is like Yahweh in the Old Testament, who is unconditionally compassionate. Jesus pitied her for what she was and not for what she could do. Her faith was not a prerequisite for divine action. Again, she, as a person, was at the center of the narrative. It is impressive to note the frequency of her personal pronoun, αυτ| in vv. 12-13; these verses describe her meeting with Jesus. "The dead young man is resuscitated because of Jesus' sympathy for the man's widowed mother" (Roth, 1997). Observe the sympathy shown for the widow's affliction. "Much people of the city was with her." Perhaps Jesus saw his own mother in that widow; we do not know. Or an aunt or neighbor who had experienced what now faced her. Jesus is close

now. His group is near the town gate, and the funeral procession is just leaving the town.

Jesus' first impulse is to comfort her. "Don't cry," he says. How often have you comforted a child or a spouse with those words? These words mean well, but they do not remove the cause of the hurt, the reason for the weeping.

A Great Prophet in Our Midst: The Prophetic Revelation of Jesus at Nain (Luke 7:16-17)

In Luke 7:16-17, the Gospel presents a powerful scene in the village of Nain that reveals Jesus as more than a teacher—he is the Prophet through whom God has visited His people. The people's response to the miracle of raising the widow's son points to awe and wonder and a theological declaration: that in Jesus, God's mercy and power have become manifest in their midst.

The first reaction of the crowd highlights a recurring biblical theme: when divine power is made visible, it evokes both awe and praise. Luke tells us that "fear seized them all" and that they began to glorify God. The Greek terms φόβος (phobos, fear) and ἐδόξαζον (edoxazon, glorified) suggest not a paralyzing fear but a profound reverence—an overwhelming sense of God's holiness and mercy on display. Alford (1863–1878) explains that such fear is a natural consequence of witnessing God's power directly. Yet, not all fear is equal. Calvin (1840–1857) distinguishes between the fear of unbelievers, marked by dread and resistance, and the fear of the faithful, which leads to humility and sincere worship. In this case, the people responded with gratitude, reverence, and praise, rendering honor to God for what they had just witnessed.

Their praise, however, was not merely emotional; it carried theological weight. The crowd cried out, "A great prophet has arisen in our midst." This declaration connects Jesus to the lineage of Israel's mighty prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha, who had also performed miracles, including raising the dead. These villagers, grounded in their Jewish tradition, interpreted the event through their only lens—the prophetic. As commentator Whedon (1874–1909) notes, this was not a failure to recognize Jesus' divinity but a respectful acknowledgment of his identity within the framework they understood. Jesus had not yet fully revealed himself as the Son of God, but through this act, he was clearly more than a rabbi—he was the promised Prophet foretold by Moses.

This recognition deepens further with their next exclamation: "God has visited His people."This phrase, rich in Old Testament imagery, is not a casual remark. The Greek verb ἐπεσκέψατο (epeskepsato) denotes a divine visitation—one intended for restoration, healing, and redemption. It is also used in the Greek Old Testament to refer to God's gracious visitation in bringing salvation (Beyer, 1964). The evangelist

justly observes that they glorified God by acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah (Coke, 1801-1803). Used in the Septuagint and echoed by Zechariah in Luke 1:68, it marks an act of God's mercy breaking into history. Calvin (1840–1857) explains that such visitation aims to restore people to their original dignity and relationship with God. Thus, in recognizing Jesus' act as a sign of God's visitation, the people of Nain were not only acknowledging the miracle—they were proclaiming that God's salvation was once again active in their midst.

A phenomenological perspective enhances this understanding by drawing attention to the lived, immediate experience of the event. From this viewpoint, the narrative is not just about doctrinal conclusions but about how people encounter and interpret the divine in real-time. The raising of the widow's son is an event charged with emotional, sensory, and spiritual resonance. It is an encounter where the fullness of Jesus' personhood is disclosed, his divinity revealed in the act of resurrection, and his humanity revealed in his deep compassion for the grieving mother.

The people's interpretation of Jesus as a "great prophet" reflects their attempt to make sense of the extraordinary using familiar categories. Yet, phenomenologically, their perception also reveals the limits of recognition. Although they witnessed a miracle, they did not fully grasp who performed it. As McGarvey and Pendleton (1914) observe, "they recognized the presence of God's power and mercy, yet by no means apprehended the nearness of his very person." The divine visitation they acknowledged was still partial, filtered through expectation and tradition. They remembered Elijah, but did not yet recognize ὁ Κύριος (ho Kyrios)—the Lord—who stood before them, not as a mere prophet, but as the embodiment of God's saving power.

This partial recognition is not surprising. As the Gospel narrative unfolds, even John the Baptist will later ask, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Luke 7:19). The question reflects the dissonance between Jesus' actual mission and the people's preconceived expectations. As with the crowd at Nain, even the most devout sometimes miss the deeper meaning of God's presence when it arrives in unexpected form.

This theme resonates deeply with the image from Revelation: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. 3:20). Jesus was at the gates of Nain, performing divine acts with tenderness and authority, yet many still did not fully see him. The miracle was a knock at the door of their hearts—a visitation that demanded not just awe but recognition.

The significance of this moment is amplified in the final verse: "This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding region."

Although the miracle occurred in Galilee, Luke uses "Judea" likely as a reference to the entire Jewish territory (SermonWriter, n.d.). Including Judea means the entire domain of Herod (Antipas and Agrippa I) with all the regions surrounding it (Coffman, 1983-1999). This phrasing indicates that the impact of the miracle went beyond local amazement—it reverberated throughout the land. Commentators suggest that "all the surrounding region" may even include Gentile territories, emphasizing the widespread nature of Jesus' emerging reputation.

It is especially striking that this miracle took place near Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, where he had been rejected earlier. Now, performing a miracle so close to home, Jesus offers his own village another opportunity to believe. The spread of the news to Judea and beyond is a testimony to his power and a renewed invitation to faith.

The story of the widow's son at Nain is more than a miracle account; it is a theological turning point. In Jesus, the people recognize a prophet like Elijah, and in their reverent fear and glorification, they acknowledge that God has indeed visited His people. The moment reveals Jesus not only as a great teacher or healer but as the long-awaited Prophet whose presence fulfills God's promise of redemption. Though not yet fully revealed as the Son of God, Jesus is unmistakably shown to be the bearer of divine power, mercy, and hope. A phenomenological lens reveals both the intensity of this encounter and the tragedy of its incomplete recognition, a reminder that divine presence often comes quietly, knocking and waiting to be fully seen.

Conclusions

This study has explored the theological and exegetical dimensions of compassion as exemplified by Jesus in Scripture, particularly through the miracle at Nain in Luke's Gospel. The analysis reveals that compassion, as demonstrated by Christ, is not merely an emotional response but a transformative act that restores life, dignity, and hope. Through this lens, the miracle at Nain emerges as more than a demonstration of divine power. It becomes a profound theological statement about God's attention to the overlooked, the suffering, and the forgotten.

Nain is a place where a miracle happened, a humble, almost forgotten town mentioned only once in Scripture, yet chosen as the setting for a remarkable act of divine compassion. This emphasizes a key message: even people and places deemed insignificant can become sites of God's miraculous grace. The widow, the dead son, the mourning crowd, and the town itself symbolize the contemporary individuals and communities who live on the margins—those who often go unseen or unheard. Yet the Gospel reminds us that Jesus sees them, moves toward them, and restores them. His compassion is boundless, available even when it is not asked for, especially in the places we might least expect.

The impact of this study lies in its call to a hermeneutic of compassion, an interpretive approach that not only seeks to understand the biblical text intellectually but allows it to shape moral and pastoral practice. It bridges the gap between scriptural exegesis and daily Christian living, encouraging scholars, ministers, and laypeople alike to read Scripture with hearts open to transformation. This approach contributes to the field of exegesis by highlighting the relational, ethical, and spiritual implications of biblical texts, particularly those that feature the marginalized and the suffering.

Reflecting on the loss of individuals who embodied suffering, invisibility, and ultimately, dignity, it becomes clear that Nain's message is not distant or abstract. These real-life experiences underscore the urgency of Christ-like compassion in our world today. Whether through comforting the grieving or recognizing the dignity of the poor and forgotten, Christians are called to act as bearers of God's compassion in tangible ways.

Ultimately, this study serves both as an academic contribution and a spiritual invitation to see the unnoticed, to value the neglected, and to believe that compassion, grounded in the example of Jesus, has the power to bring life where there is death, and hope where there is despair. In this way, exegesis becomes a scholarly endeavor and a call to live out the Gospel in word and in action.

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