

## **PENTECOST: SHARING NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT**

**The Second Sunday after Pentecost  
June 6, 2010**

**I Kings 17:17-24  
Psalm 30  
Galatians 1:11-24  
Luke 7:11-17**

### **JESUS: LOVING COMFORTER & POWERFUL VICTOR OVER DEATH**

In Luke's Gospel account we see Jesus and his disciples approaching the city of Nain, probably more a large village than a city, located about five miles southeast of Nazareth where Jesus had grown up. A funeral procession is making its way to the place of burial. In typical Middle Eastern fashion, most everyone in the city is there in support of the widow whose only son has died.

When Jesus sees the funeral procession he is filled with compassion. He approaches the widow and offers words of comfort. Then, to everyone's horror, He touches the bier – something no one would do, certainly no rabbi, as it would make him ceremonially unclean. Finally, even more shockingly, he tells the dead son to get up – and he does!

Imagine the crowd. They don't know where to look first – the no longer dead young man ... the young man's amazed and ecstatic mother ... or this stranger who, like one of the prophets of old has just raised the dead.

Please note, there is no question from Jesus to the widow about her faith. Jesus seems to act here from sheer compassion – one of the few instances where Jesus performs a miracle with no mention of faith.

People often ask what ancient stories like this have to do with us?

The answer lies in part in the fact that life's circumstances are frankly not so very different today than they were 2,000 years ago. A mother's loss of her son, or any such loss, creates the same emotions, questions and fears. We look today for answers to the ultimate issues of life in much the same way people have sought answers for centuries.

As Christians, we believe the Bible, while not telling us everything we might like to know, does shed the light of truth on everything we need to know about life and eternity.

In this particular story we see our Savior's sympathy with the sorrowing. He is the loving Comforter, the Victor over death, the Reuniter of separated loved ones. And for all who trust in him today, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who watches over our souls. He is the Bread of Life, the Living Water who nourishes and satisfies our every need. He is the resurrection and the life who

“has ended the power of death and through the gospel has revealed immortal life” (2 Timothy 1.10b *GNT*).

This week’s Reflection was prepared by the Rev. Thomas R. May, Director of Content Quality Assurance for the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship at the American Bible Society.

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**This week we remember to pray for the work of Bible Societies in: Northern Ireland** – with thanks to God for opportunities to serve and learn about sister Bible Societies and with them, to impact many people with the Gospel; and with prayers for refreshed attitudes toward the Bible among churches and people, efforts to attract new supporters, and that all who seek the Lord may have a Bible; **Republic of Ireland** – with thanks to God for fully supported projects including the *Year of Evangelisation* initiative of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin; and with prayers for plans for a major *Conference on the Word*, and financial means to support training courses and youth initiatives; **England & Wales** – with thanks to God for guidance over the past year and *Unscripted*, a short film that won an award in a competition designed to encourage young filmmakers to draw inspiration from the Bible; and with prayers for projects enabling young people to work with those living with HIV/AIDS, as well as new initiatives with the British media and Parliament; **Scotland** – with thanks to God for a raised profile resulting from bicentennial celebrations and the generosity of donors giving toward a project in north-east Brazil; and with prayers for more people praying, volunteering and giving toward Bible Society work, courage to follow up fresh opportunities, and for positive response in schools to new curriculum guidelines in the Society’s *Bibleworld* resources.

**Activity Corner: “A Prayer of Praise”**

Supplies needed: Bible; writing paper or index cards; pens or pencils.

Read together Psalm 30. Consider reading it antiphonally (women/girls reading the odd numbered verses, men/boys reading the even-numbered verses); or gathering in a circle with each one taking a turn reading a verse. The word “praise” appears three times in this psalm (verses 4, 9, 12). Discuss how the word is used in each of these three verses. For what is the psalm writer thankful? How does this psalm demonstrate the theme, “restored to life?” Distribute a sheet of writing paper or an index card to each member of your household. Across the top write, “Restored to Life” and encourage each one to write a prayer of praise, thanking God for a time when God turned their sorrow into joy. Use these prayers throughout the week during your family devotional time.