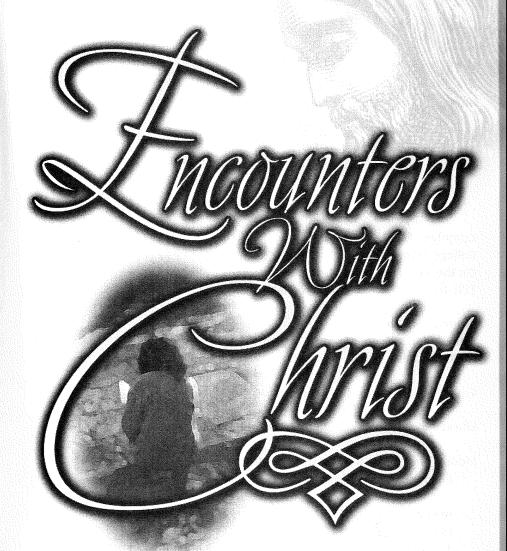
Mark E. Moore



A Call To Commitment



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To Josh and Megan

More than all my studies you two have taught me about faith in Jesus. Indeed, "The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."



An Heir Raising Experience



{Luke 7:11-16; § 56}

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people."

As Jesus' popularity increases, so does his entourage. He travels the 20 miles from Capernaum to Nain with a substantial swarm of followers. As they approach the village gate, they encounter another group trying to get out. Suddenly we have an ancient traffic jam. This was a problem. The crowd coming out of the city was a funeral procession that Jesus inadvertently stopped in its tracks.

Jesus led his procession; a widow led the other. She had already lost her husband and just now lost her son. It is all so sad, more so when one realizes this son was her only social security. Jesus, never untouched by a funeral, feels compassion for her. He wants to help, but his words surely don't. He says to the weeping widow, "Stop crying"! Now that's a fine "how-do-you-do." You can't blame her if she is a little confused by all this. Then Jesus does something that under normal circumstances would be downright rude. He walks over to the coffin and touches it.

Right about now her mind is racing, her stomach turning, and I wouldn't be surprised if her fist didn't clench. But then (if she thinks this is strange, she ain't seen nothin'!), wonder of all wonders, the boy sits up and speaks. The Bible doesn't record what he says, but one thing is certain, he had everyone's undivided attention!

The crowd's reaction is about what you would expect. They were dumbfounded. They praised God. Undoubtedly they broke into laugh-

ter, tears, even a bit of dancing. They cried out, "A great prophet has appeared to us. God has come to help his people." Indeed, he had. You might recall that Elijah healed the widow's son at Zarephath (1 Kgs. 17:17-24). His protégée, Elisha, healed the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kgs. 4:32-37). (By the way, Shunem is just over the next hill from Nain. This story struck close to home.) Luke has already paired these two great prophets in Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (4:25-27). In other words, this story is not merely about a wondrous deed that Jesus performed. It is a deliberate comparison by Luke between the power of Jesus and the power of the great prophets Elijah and Elisha.

The conclusion of the crowd is not, "Wow! What a great gig." Rather it is, "God has visited us." The miracle was only a prelude to the person. Jesus is clearly God's envoy. That means salvation is near; the divine cavalry has come. Yet that cavalry would meet Calvary. This boy too would someday face death again. Does this mean God failed? No, of course not. The story doesn't end at the grave. These are merely previews of things to come. As glorious as this boy's resuscitation was, it pales in comparison to the resurrection it promises. Through the tears that shroud this veil of death, this little tale of an unnamed widow's son reminds us of better things to come.

Further Reading: John 5:24-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

Ponderable Questions: What are the theological implications of Jesus' reenacting Elijah's miracle? How do you think you would have responded had you witnessed this miracle? Would this radical miracle be any more easily believed back then than it is today? What do you think your own resurrection will be like, both the experience and your body?

Considerations for Prayer: Bless the name of the Lord, whose power extends even over death.