

**HOLINESS**  
**RAISING THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN**

**October 9, 2011**  
**17th Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Revision C**

**Gospel: Luke 7:11-16**  
**Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1**

Today's Gospel lesson is used in the West at about this same time of year for the 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity or sometimes for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. Today's Epistle lesson is not used at all in the Western lectionary for Sundays.

**Word Study: Holiness vs. Uncleanness**

There are a number of different words in the Greek New Testament that speak of holiness and sacred things versus uncleanness, defilement and contamination. Table I lists some definitions of Greek words. There are five root words listed that have different forms (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) and different connotations (the state of, the quality of), etc. To get a practical understanding of these words, let us look at how the root word is used in the New Testament.

Hagios is used as the name for the Holy Spirit (*Hagion Pneuma*). The Lord Jesus is referred to using *hagios*: "...the holy (*hagion*) thing being born (of Mary) will be called Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Some other uses of *hagios* are as follows:

<b>Holy Thing, Person</b>	<b>Some References</b>
The Holy Prophets	Luke 1:70, Acts 3:21, 2 Peter 3:2
The Holy Apostles	Ephesians 3:5
The Holy Scriptures	Romans 1:2
The Holy Angels	Matthew 25:31, Acts 10:22
Jerusalem (The Holy City)	Matthew 27:53, Revelation 11:2
New Jerusalem (The Holy City)	Revelation 21:2, 10; 22:19
Mosaic Law (the Holy Covenant, The Holy Commandment)	Luke 1:72, 2 Peter 2:21, Romans 7:12

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**Table 1**  
**Greek Words Describing Holiness & Defilement**

Greek Word	Definitions	Reference # in Strong's Dictionary
<b>Hagios</b>	the saints or the sacred ones	40
Hagiazo	to purify, make holy	37
Hagiasmos	purification, state of purity	38
Hagion	a sacred thing	39
Hagiotes	state of sacredness	41
Hagiosune	quality of sacredness	42
<b>Akathartos</b>	impure in the demonic sense	169
Akathartes	state of impurity	168
Akatharsia	quality of impurity	167
<b>Koinos</b>	common	2839
Koinoo	to make common	2840
<b>Miahino</b>	to contaminate	3392
Miahsma	contamination, the effect	3393
Miahsmos	contamination, the act	3394
<b>Moluna</b>	to make black, to soil	3435
Molusmos	a stain	3436

Quite opposed to *Hagios* is the word *Akathartos*. While *Hagios* is used for the Holy Spirit, the most prolific use<sup>1</sup> of *Akathartos* is for “unclean” spirits (*akatharton pneuma*) that Jesus, the Twelve, the Seventy and others cast out of people. *Akathartos* is also used together with other words such as adultery, fornication, greediness, lewdness, covetousness, etc. For example:

- “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: fornication, uncleanness (*akatharsia*) lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, etc.” (Galatians 5:19).
- Those alienated from God because of hardness of heart have “given themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness (*akatharsias*) in greediness” (Ephesians 4:19).
- “But fornication and all uncleanness (*akatharsia*) or greediness, let it not be named among you” (Ephesians 5:3).
- “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness (*akatharsian*), passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5).
- The ungrateful, who professed to be wise and worshipped creation, “God gave them over in the desire of their hearts to uncleanness (*akatharsian*) to dishonor their bodies among them” (Romans 1:24).

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 10:1, 12:43; Mark 1:23-27; 3:11, 30; 5:2-13; 6:7; 7:25; Luke 4:33-36; Luke 6:18; 8:29; 9:42; 11:24; Acts 5:16, 8:7; Revelation 16:13, 18:2

Not as commonly used is the word *Moluno*, which comes from the Greek word meaning black, and therefore means to blacken or make dirty. It's only used four times in the New Testament; once in our Epistle reading (2 Corinthians 7:1). The other three uses are 1 Corinthians 8:7, Revelation 3:4, 14:4.

The Epistle reading starts off with a series of contrasts:

righteousness	lawlessness
light	darkness
Christ	Belial
believers	unbelievers
temple of God	idols

What is Belial? Belial here is a word borrowed from Hebrew meaning worthless. It is used a number of times in the Old Testament as “son of Belial” or “man of Belial” usually translated “worthless one” or “worthless man”. But it goes deeper than just worthlessness. Solomon referred to a man of Belial (Proverbs 6:12) as one who devised evil continually, and spoke of seven abominations that the Lord hates that were characteristic of the men of Belial. (Proverbs 6:16-19):

- Haughty eyes
- A lying tongue
- Hands that shed innocent blood
- A heart that devises wicked plans
- Feet that run to evil
- A false witness who utters lies
- One who spreads strife among brothers

These characteristics go deeper than just worthlessness; they're of demonic origin and imply *akathartos*. David stated that the only way to deal with men of Belial was with iron and the shaft of a spear (2 Samuel 23:6-7), probably because they can't be trusted to follow orders. What agreement can Christ possibly have with Belial?

Paul makes these contrasts to say that we are the temple of the Living God (2 Corinthians 6:16). He then quotes from Ezekiel 37:26-27, which in turn refers to the restored Kingdom of God that lasts forever. “I will dwell in them” as one dwells in a Temple (v.16).

John Chrysostom comments<sup>2</sup> on this as follows: “Do you bear God within you and yet run to them (lawlessness, darkness, Belial, etc.)? God, who has nothing in common with them? And in what way can this deserve forgiveness? Bear in mind Who walks and Who dwells in you”.

Continuing with the Old Testament Temple analogy, Paul quoted from Isaiah 52:11, which contains mixed images from the restored Old Testament Kingdom and the future coming of the Kingdom of God in glory. Referring to the contrasts (Christ - Belial), Paul used the Isaiah

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<sup>2</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XIII, vv. 15-16.

52 passage to encourage the Corinthians to “come out from among them and be separate. Do not touch anything unclean (*akathartos*, *i.e.*, *demonic*) and I will receive you” (v.17). Paul is not imposing the Mosaic Law rituals regarding washings; he is warning against something sinister involved with being unequally yoked (v.14). Verse 18 follows with a loose paraphrase of 2 Samuel 7:14, which speaks of the close relationship between King David and the Lord.

Paul concludes “let us cleanse (*katharia*, the opposite of *akathartos*) ourselves from all filthiness (*moluno* or blackening, staining) of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness (*hagiosune* as in the saints, *hagios*, and the Holy Spirit, *Hagion Pneuma*) in the fear of God” (7:1). Chrysostom pointed out that Paul did not say to avoid intermixing with unbelievers, but to avoid being yoked with them.

Another example of cleansing of heart and soul in order to appear before God is the example of Israel at Mt. Sinai. To prepare to hear the words of the Law spoken by a Holy God, the people needed to prepare to become a kingdom of priests by:

- Washing their clothes
- Fasting from sex
- Consecration by Moses

Anyone, man or beast, that touched the holy mountain that the Lord God came down on was to be put to death (Exodus 19:10-15).

“Cleansing” is amplified by the Apostle John (1 John 2:4-6, 3:1-3): “He who says he abides in Him ought to walk as He walked” (1 John 2:6). This world does not know us because it didn’t know Him (1 John 3:1, John 1:10). That’s why we separate ourselves. The world won’t have anything to do with us; we’ll just get blackened or dirtied by the world.

While we are in the world, we, like Christ and the Holy Spirit, are not of the world. We are made holy or sanctified (Greek: *hagiazō*) by the Word (Greek: *logos*) which is Truth (John 17:14-19). By contrast, what the world offers is lawlessness, darkness, worthlessness, and delusion. Ezekiel puts it this way: “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols” (Ezekiel 36:24-25). The whole point of the Mosaic Law’s focus on clean vs. unclean was not to exclude Gentiles but to focus on holiness and avoid the filthiness of demons and idols. Seen in this light, the Mosaic Law really makes sense.

Paul concluded this section with the encouragement to perfect holiness in the fear of God (7:1). Since we are in the world, but not of the world (John 15:19, 17:14; 1 John 4:4-6, 3:1), seeking holiness is a continual process. John Chrysostom comments<sup>3</sup>: “Yet he (Paul) is not content with this, but adds, ‘Perfecting holiness in the fear of God’. For to avoid touching unclean things does not thereby make you clean, but something else is needed for becoming holy: earnestness, heedfulness, piety. And he well said, ‘In the fear of God’. For it is possible to perfect chasteness, not in the fear of God but for vain glory”.

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<sup>3</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XIII, v. 18.

## ***RAISING THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN ON RECONCILIATION***

**October 9, 2011  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Luke  
Revision E**

### **Gospel: Luke 7:11-16**

Today's Gospel lesson is used in the West at about this same time of year for the 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity or sometimes for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.

### **Gospel Lesson: Luke 7:11-16**

Whereas many of the accounts of events in Jesus' life are recorded in several, if not all four, of the Gospel accounts, today's lesson is recorded only by Luke. The setting for this event is early in the second year of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus had just finished the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5:1-7:29) and the "Sermon on the Plain" (so called from Luke 6:17) shortly thereafter (Luke 6:17-49). The Twelve Apostles have been selected by Jesus, (Luke 6:12-16) but have not yet been sent out two-by-two to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-6). John the Baptist had been imprisoned (Luke 7:18-23) but not yet beheaded by Herod (Luke 9:7-9). Shortly after this Gospel account, John the Baptist's disciples came to Jesus and asked if He was the One to come or if they should look for another. Jesus replied that they should look around, for the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Today's Gospel lesson was the illustration He gave them for the dead being raised.

Following the "Sermon on the Plain," Jesus went to Capernaum, which is at the Northern end of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 7:1). The next day, He went to the city of Nain (Luke 7:11) which is about 20 miles distant as the crow flies and is about 5 miles Southeast of His hometown of Nazareth. This was a good day's journey, since it meant crossing the mountain range near Mt. Tabor (1800 feet elevation).

As Jesus arrived outside Nain, accompanied by a large crowd, He encountered a funeral procession coming out of the city. Carried in an open coffin in the procession was the body of the only son of a widow. The funeral procession also had a large crowd, and the widow was openly weeping.

From the events described in Luke, it appears that the widow of Nain was not well off financially. First, the dead man was being carried in an open coffin (v.14). Secondly, when Jesus spoke to him, "Young man, I say to you, arise" (v.14), he sat up and began to speak immediately. There was no need to "unbind him" as was necessary for Lazarus when he was raised (John 11:44). This is because Lazarus and the Lord Himself were given a rich man's

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burial. For example, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea bound Jesus' body with strips of linen mixed with 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes, creating a mummy or cocoon (John 19:39-40). This is why Peter and John believed He was risen as soon as they saw the burial clothes; the mummy was empty and undisturbed; Jesus rose right through the burial wrappings.

For the son of the widow of Nain, there were no burial wrappings like Lazarus or Jesus. He was being carried to a pauper's grave. These circumstances put the widow in very difficult financial straits. Under Mosaic Law, no special provisions were made for widows (except for a share of the triennial third tithe) because the oldest son – who had the birthright or extra share of the property – had the duty to provide for her. This is why Jesus asked His second cousin John to care for His mother just before He died (John 19:26-27). In addition, the Scribes and Pharisees of that day were well known to foreclose on widows' houses when the poverty-stricken widows ran out of money (Matthew 23:14).

Of the three people Jesus is recorded as raising from the dead: Lazarus (John 11:38-45), Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43) and the widow's son, in each case there is implied a considerable amount of compassion of Jesus toward the bereaved. In Lazarus' case, Jesus, Himself, wept (John 11:35). In Jairus' case, Jairus "begged Jesus earnestly, saying 'My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live'" (Mark 5:23). However, she died before Jesus arrived. In the case of the widow's son, Jesus came to the funeral procession uninvited, for "He had compassion on her" (v.15).

The above three cases represent three different stages of death. Jairus' daughter had just died and was still lying on her bed (Mark 5:40). The widow's son had died recently and was being carried to his grave (v.12). Lazarus had been dead four days and was beginning to decompose (John 11:39).

When the Lord saw the widow, He had compassion on her, raised her son from the dead and presented him to his mother. The response of both large crowds was one of being seized with fear glorifying God and saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us," and "God has visited His people" (Luke 7:16). Word of this event spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding neighborhood, including Nazareth (Luke 7:17).

This account in Luke is very similar to one that occurred during the life of the prophet Elijah. Elijah had prophesied that there would be no rain for 3 ½ years (1 Kings 17:1, 18:1, Luke 4:25). During most of that period, he lived in Zarephath (just south of Sidon) in an upper room at the house of a widow who had one young child (1 Kings 17:9-10). The widow was expecting to starve to death due to the famine (v.12), but Elijah saw to it that the jar of flour and the jar of oil never ran out (v.16). Near the end of the 3 ½ years, the widow's son died, and Elijah raised him from the dead (vv.17-24). According to tradition, the widow's son was Jonah the prophet, whose three days in the belly of the sea monster prophesied about the Lord's death and resurrection (Velimirovic, Prologue, Sept. 22).

With this background in mind, it was no accident that Jesus went to Nain at this time. A few months earlier, He quoted the above account about Elijah to people in the synagogue of Nazareth (5 miles away) in response to their unbelief (Luke 4:24-26). This made them so angry

that they tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-30). They had wanted him to do in Nazareth what He had done in Capernaum (Luke 4:23), but Jesus said that “no prophet is accepted in His own country” (Luke 4:24), and He could do few miracles there (Mark 6:1-6). The response of the people of Nain was quite the opposite. This is a very interesting comparison. Even the Son of God can be limited in His performing of miracles depending on the faith of the people present. Why? In His mercy, He is reluctant to bring increasing judgment on them for rejecting Him.

Comparing Nain with Nazareth is a study in light versus darkness. John Chrysostom calls death and error, darkness: “For the light which our physical eyes see does not shine in darkness but apart from it; but the preaching of Christ has shown forth in the midst of prevailing error, and made it disappear. And He, by enduring death, has so overcome death that He has restored those already held by it,” (Homily V on John 1). Nazareth’s response to One who had grown up in their midst was to try to throw Him off a cliff; that’s darkness trying to overcome the Light. Nain’s response was to receive Him as a great prophet; that’s darkness disappearing when the Light arrives.

One might note that there is a difference between resuscitation and resurrection. The widow’s son in Nain was resuscitated; eventually he would die again. The same is true of other recorded cases in the Scripture: Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:41-56), Lazarus (John 11:38-46), many saints at Jesus’ crucifixion (Matthew 27:51), Tabitha raised by Peter (Acts 9:36), Jonah raised by Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24) and even the dead man who touched Elisha’s bones (2 Kings 13:20-21).

The resurrection of the Son of God was different from all these. He rose, never to die again (Romans 6:9). His appearance in His resurrected body looked different in some way, yet He was still recognizable (John 21:12). His body was still flesh and bones, and He ate food in their presence (Luke 24:39-43). Yet His resurrected body passed through solid walls and appeared to His disciples when they were huddled behind locked doors (John 20:19).

Those who are raised by the Son of God at the Second Coming will be like Him. There will be a transfiguration where “the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43, Daniel 12:3). These will never die again either “but have passed from death to life (John 5:24). May we all be found worthy of this resurrection and thus avoid the second death (Revelation 20:14).