



My Beloved Ones,

This week's Gospel presents an important lesson for each of us, concerning death, and ultimate object of our lives as Orthodox Christians: eternal life with God.

We find our Lord, visiting different cities and villages, teaching and instructing the people—when he comes to a beautiful city called Nain. As He prepares to enter the city, He, and the large crowd of disciples and followers see a funeral procession passing on their way out of the city. The dead man, Luke the Evangelist tells us, was the only son of a widow. Understandably then, she was full of grief and quite desperate.

Christ approaches the widow, compassionately comforting her, before commanding her son, "*Young man, I say to you, arise*" (Luke 7:14). Immediately, the son is resurrected in front of all the surprised people, and he is reunited with his grateful mother.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Creator of the universe, holds all things in His hands, including human beings. We can see, even before His trampling down upon death, through His own Resurrection, His ability to raise ordinary men and women from the dead: including the daughter of Jairus, and, eventually, His friend, Lazarus.

In his commentaries, a Church Father, Euthymius Zigabenus writes that we have been created by God not to die. Death is a result of the Fall of Adam and Eve. Death is not a punishment from God, who of course, is Love, as well as the author of all good things. However, as human beings, when we are not careful and ignore the image of God that dwells within us, we judge ourselves and punish ourselves. Death is a result of our continuing to separate ourselves from God; choosing to take ourselves away from Paradise.

When a person dies, it does not mean an ending, much as it does the separation of the two things that make up our nature: the flesh, and the spirit. The soul, the breath and image of God, is immortal. Therefore, after the death of the earthly body, the soul returns to await the Second Coming of its Creator. Typically, we refer to Christ returning to us as a Judge, but ultimately, it is up to how *we* chose to live our earthly lives, which will determine if we are to live separately from Him, or together with Him in eternity.

The Resurrection of the Widow's son demonstrates that Christ alone holds dominion over the unity of body and flesh. When there is a soul, the flesh has life—but a body without a soul can only bring destruction.

I hope and pray, that, when the time comes, we can all say we have lived our lives in such a way, that we can "stand before the awesome judgement seat of Christ" without fear or shame.

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