

An abstract image featuring a large, dynamic splash of blue ink or paint against a light, off-white background. The ink forms intricate, swirling patterns with varying shades of blue, from deep navy to a lighter, misty blue. The overall effect is one of movement and depth.

# IN THE FACE OF JESUS

## Sermon Growth Guide

**June 15, 2025**

**There is Love**



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**Luke 7:11-17**

**Key Verse:** Luke 7:13

“Love is willing the good for the other even at the sacrifice of the self.”

**Big Idea:** Love is willing the good for the other even at the sacrifice of the self.

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## Foundations

This week we start our sermon series, “In the Face of Jesus.”

We hear of the face of God multiple times in the Bible. Think of the blessing found in Numbers, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”

When the Bible speaks of “the face,” it can often represent presence, identity, relational closeness or direct attention. When we think of the face of Jesus, then, we recognize Jesus’ identity and acknowledge His presence. This week, we see Love in His face.

The widow in this passage was also blessed to see love in Jesus. Widows at this time would have been dependent on their son to care for them. Without her son, this widow was facing an uncertain future. Jesus saw her predicament and helped her in the way only He could. Later, James would summon believers with, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress...”

Jesus paved the way in looking after a widow in the most tangible way. He looked on her with love as he admonished her not to cry, and he showed love as he healed her son. He went on to show His love as He laid down His life.

## Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Luke 7:11-17. This passage follows another where Jesus heals. Why are so many healings part of Jesus’ ministry? Why would Jesus have had abundant compassion on this widow? What would it have meant for both crowds (the one following Jesus and the one following the widow), to see Jesus touch a coffin and purposely make Himself unclean?

## Applying God’s Word

In this passage, Jesus saw the widow, recognized her pain, spoke to her and then helped her – all part of loving her. Which part of loving others comes hardest to you? Do you ever require something before loving someone? Why or why not? Pastor Tim reminds us that love is willing the good for the other at the sacrifice of the self. Does your love ever stop at a certain point?

## Witnessing God’s Word

An older Christian song reminds “they’ll know we are Christians by our love.” We reflect Jesus. Jesus was love. How are you reflecting Jesus’ love today?

Happy Fathers Day. I'm so grateful for my dad and stepdad and the fathers in my life. I hope you are too. Fathers can change the tone with a glance, can't they? I know my face is an open book. Whatever I'm feeling is right there in my eyes! Fathers have to be careful to convey love. In the Face of Jesus there is love. What do you imagine when I say "the face of Jesus"? Most of us see something like this, probably. Lately, we have started calling that "European Jesus." That prompted people to reimagine. If the European culture put together a face of Jesus that looks like them, maybe we should all do that. Maybe we should have Latino Jesus, Asian Jesus, Native American Jesus, Black Jesus. Maybe, but there is nothing that says we need to imagine that Jesus looks like us, nothing in the Bible says to make sure He looks like you. That last one in the corner, I think that's an AI generated Jesus. We don't have a picture. Jesus didn't come at a time in history when we can have an image. I wonder what we would lose if we did. The face of Jesus belongs only to our sanctified imagination.

The face of God is a huge theme in the Bible. And it isn't looking at a physical face or an idol or a statue or an icon. It is a way of talking about your relationship with God. Seek the face of God. It says in Psalms: "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always." (Psalms 105:4) and "My heart says of you, 'Seek his face!' Your face, Lord, I will seek." (Psalms 27:8) But when Moses wanted to really look on the face of God, God said it would be too much for him. "'But,' he said, 'you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.'" (Exodus 33:20) How then will we look upon God's face? And how will we know God's face looking upon us? The great Aaronic Blessing of Numbers 6 is all about the face of God: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

God's face turned toward you is like the sun. How can I see God's face? In the fullness of time, Jesus came. And Jesus took on flesh. And Jesus had a face. So when Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father, "Jesus answered: 'Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" (John 14:9) The face of God is Jesus.

So, we are going to do a thing this summer. This series is kind of a little project. We are going to look In the Face of Jesus, to peer into the face of Jesus. Not a picture, the man. We, if we are believers in Christ, we are being formed into the likeness of Jesus each of us. The Holy Spirit is at work in us shaping us into the likeness of Jesus. Galatians 5 tells us a little of what those characteristics are when it outlines the fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law... Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." (Galatians 5:22-23,25) So, if that's what becoming like Jesus looks like, we will find those same qualities in the face of Jesus. Each week we will look and see that in the face of Jesus there is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, and this will be a great encouragement to all of us, as we follow in the way of Jesus. Today, in the face of Jesus, There is Love. I get the easy one.

"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." (Luke 7:11-12) Well, there is nothing strange about that. Nothing odd about a person dying. It

happens all the time. It's as common as the rain. But here a mother grieves a child. That is heavy. It's her grief to bear, but it is so heavy the whole community seems to share in its mass and weight. There is a large crowd with her. Actually, there are two large crowds in this story. There is a crowd following Jesus and His disciples out of Capernaum where Jesus just healed a man. This is a crowd filled with hope, full of life, prancing along in celebration behind the man who can bring the blessings of God. The other large crowd is coming out of Nain, walking behind a coffin, trudging across the land with cement feet in the slow pace of grief, loss, pain, hopelessness. Jesus and the woman lead them. Two crowds. Now they intersect. How will they intersect? How can these two large crowds come together? Love. "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.'" (Luke 7:13)

Jesus decides to reverse the curse. The moment is right to reveal His glory a little more. It reminds everyone there of Elijah, the most powerful prophet of old who performed the most miraculous deeds. When Elijah was in Zarephath and a widow lost her son, Elijah prayed to God and God raised the child from the dead. This is like that. Only better. "Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers 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." (Luke 7:14-15) Jesus didn't pray for God to command the boy to rise from the dead, Jesus commanded it. Jesus did it, of His own authority. Rise. When the people saw that they saw the face of God in Jesus. "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.'" (Luke 7:16) God has come. That's Jesus.

Now, I don't know why Jesus healed this one and not that one. That troubles us, doesn't it? "If you can, why don't you do?" We don't know. But the miracles of Jesus are demonstrations of what we call the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. He doesn't heal every blind man, but the fact that He healed one points to a Kingdom where blindness is overcome forever. He doesn't raise every dead child, but the fact that He raised this one points to something. A Kingdom is coming, and is already here, where death does not have the last word, where eternal life reigns.

In the face of Jesus, there is love. "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.'" (Luke 7:13) His heart went out. From His inside, from His inner core, there was a movement toward her. He loved her. What does that mean? He liked her a lot? He found her special and thought they might have things in common? He had an affinity toward her? No. What is love? Love is willing the good for the other even at the sacrifice of the self. Love is a verb, an action. There are lots of ways to define and understand love. Of course, there must be the emotion. Love is an emotion we feel. But it is also active and self-sacrificing. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) Who's been to a wedding this month? He loved her. His heart went out. In the face of Jesus, there is love. "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10) Love in Jesus' eyes means knowing He will give Himself away.



Love has a cost. Queen Elizabeth said, "Grief is the price we pay for love." If it doesn't cost something, is it truly love? On Father's Day, there is a story from years ago that I've never forgotten. It was just a tiny news blurb after a horrible earthquake hit Turkey in 1999. A boy was rescued after a few days in the rubble. He was pinned under a beam. The way it fell, if it went down any further, he would be crushed. The other end of it was on his dad's back. For three days, his father held up that beam until the rescue came. They pulled the boy from the rubble; the father immediately died from exhaustion. "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13) There is love in the face of Jesus.

"But wait a minute, Jesus didn't do anything like that for this boy. He just reached out and touched him and used His power to make him alive again. What's the big deal?" "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, 'Don't cry.'" (Luke 7:13) In that moment, Jesus was resolved. He knew what it would cost. When Jesus says, "Don't cry," that is not just the empty, kind gesture we are used to; an ineffectual kind of pat on the shoulder. Jesus knows what it will cost to turn her tears to joy. Jesus knows what it will cost to bring these two large crowds together: grief and joy, death and life. He knows what it will take. Love has a cost.

When Jesus reached out and touched the coffin, do you know what happened? Jesus made Himself ritually unclean. "Whoever touches a human corpse will be unclean for seven days... If they fail to purify themselves after touching a human corpse, they defile the Lord's tabernacle. They must be cut off from Israel. Because the water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on them, they

are unclean; their uncleanness remains on them." (Numbers 19:11,13) Death is not the way God made things to be. Death is not a "natural part of life." Death entered the world because of sin. When we rebel from God, we divorce ourselves from the Author of Life. Death is the wages of sin; it is what sin has earned for us. Jesus took it upon Himself. Jesus took our sin to the cross. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

It wasn't just an emotion; it wasn't a nice feeling Jesus felt for the widow of Nain. It wasn't an overwhelming sadness at the injustice and wrongness of the situation. Here is a widow losing her only son, alone in the world. It was all of that, but it was more. Love in the face of Jesus is His firm resolve to bring the crowd of grief and the crowd of joy together. Love in the face of Jesus is His firm resolve to die for us so that we might live. In the face of Jesus, there is love. Receive it and live into it. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters." (1 John 3:16) Or as Jesus put it on His last night with His friends, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34)