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I want to begin this morning with a sidebar and talk just a few moments about a Supreme Court decision made this week.

I have been made painfully aware in the past because of my own error in judgement that any time I venture into anything at all that seems political is shaky ground at best, and can be an abuse of the privilege that you folks give to me to speak in this pulpit and teach.

So I need to be cautious and if I'm going to tread the waters of current events, my rule after some initial errors, is that anything I say up here must be a_political, non political, **but** if the nation is crossing over lines that the Bible is crystal clear about, I have a duty to teach what God's book says and let the chips fall where they may.

Sometimes I'm better at that than others. This week the supreme court handed down a decision where all 9 justices agreed on something and I think it's very very telling about us as a nation and where we are at and what we may expect from God who is sovereign over all nations.

The ruling takes common decency a huge step lower in the name of

liberty. Some of you may have been following this decision. There is a clothing brand in California with a brand name that I may not utter from this pulpit.

The owner of the brand wanted to register the brand's name as a trademark and the trademark office refused because of decency and vulgarity rules. The same laws that apply to the Nevada DMV so that for instance they won't allow you to get a vanity plate with indecent or immoral words. Curse words. Sexual innuendo and slang words that are degrading.

So in the name of liberty, freedom, the Supreme Court, 5 so-called conservative justices and 4 so-called liberal justices all agreed that in the name of freedom, in the name of liberty, no concession to decency or morality can be invoked. At all!

But this clearly crosses over into territory that the Bible speaks to. So just a couple of thoughts to equip you in your thinking. Not my thoughts, God's revealed truth thoughts.

Proverbs 14:34 says; *34 Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.*

That's pretty clear. National righteousness exalts a people. National sinfulness disgraces a people. That is black and white truth.

The problem is that we are adrift. We have lost our moorings and we are adrift. And what I mean by that is that someone has to define righteousness, and someone has to define sin in order for those words to have any sense. Any meaning.

Our nation was anchored in the judeo-christian ethic. The 10 commandments, and the preservative salty effect of the revealed word of God. The ethics of the Bible were the general rule of the laws of our

nation.

But in keeping consistent with secularism, we have abandoned belief in any God, and with Him, His rules, His morals, His righteousness. God is dead and His rulebook is anathema in the new secularism where autonomous individual freedom demands that we are now god, we decide what is and isn't decent.

So, the supreme court is at least consistent with our current religion and belief system which is every man is god, every man decides his own boundaries of decency.

What does the Bible say? Ephesians 4:29 is pretty clear; *Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*

Colossians 3:8

But now you must put aside all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.

Our Supreme Court voted 9 to zero to put filth in front of our collective eyes. The fact that I'm offended is trumped by another persons so-called liberty.

The frightening thing is that liberty is inextricably connected to morality. When morality fails, liberty also fails. That judgement is built into the universes spoken into being by a righteous God.

We can expect a brisk business in vanity license plates with every kind of disgusting and foul thing that wicked minds can pile into 7 characters. No holds barred, says the supreme court. If I'm offended, too bad. The court is bending me to fit the new religion. Anything goes.

What the supreme court and secular America no longer believes is what Job states in Job 12:23 *He makes nations great, and destroys them; He enlarges nations, and sends them away. 24 He deprives the earth's leaders of reason, and makes them wander a trackless wasteland....*

The nations rise and fall at the direction of the Almighty. Our nation is collectively flipping God the bird and saying, bring it, big boy.

He will. I personally believe that the only reason God has withheld judgement on the United States is that the end of days is upon us and a tidal wave of judgement is gathering just offshore.

OK, that was value added - no extra charge. Let's look at our text this morning, shall we.

The story is interpretively simple. There are no big words or problems to search the depths for good answers. But there is profound, earth shattering truth to be learned in this simple event.

There are 3 instances where Jesus called someone back from the dead. Three resurrections in the gospels of people who were dead. And I have to believe that the reason this one is just here in the narrative is because of what we will study next.

18 And the disciples of John reported to him about all these things. 19 And summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?” 20 And when the men had come to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’” 21 At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He granted sight to many who were blind. 22 And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John

what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. 23 “And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me.”

Luke is preparing us for Jesus answer to John's messengers. One of the proofs Jesus sent back to John in prison was that the dead are raised. Luke is laying groundwork for Jesus answer to John, and we will see that this happened very soon after the Centurion's slave was healed by the authoritative voice of Jesus.

The Centurion said, don't come to my house please. I am unworthy to have you in my home. But **say the word**, and my slave will be healed. The power of Jesus words. He speaks and disease and illness flee.

11 And it came about soon afterwards, that He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large multitude.

Soon afterwards. In the original dialect these words indicate this was very soon after healing the slave. Perhaps a day or two. But it's the same general time frame and period.

11 And it came about soon afterwards, that He went to a city called Nain; Nain was a small village about 6 miles south and east of Nazareth where Jesus grew up, and about a 20 mile walk from Capernaum.

So Jesus starts off for Nain. No reason given. But the first thing we want to see in this story is something we call Divine Providence. God is sovereign over everything. He is all knowing. All powerful. And every event happens within His divine providence.

Every storm. Every cloud. I was thinking about this on Thursday as we

were trying to accomplish a test sequence out where I work. An airplane was supposed to drop an asset and we are supposed to film it's descent to the earth. Millions of dollars involved in all the moving parts.

The airplane has traveled a couple of thousand miles to do this. The air space is reserved for a short window. Our entire workforce is positioned all over the area in different stations to record all the data. Every person involved is straining to accomplish the desired result.

One problem. A cloud is right in the way. We can't see the airplane when he's at the delivery point, so we won't be able to accomplish our task. He flies round and round in circles, trying, trying, trying and the stillness of the morning is weird. Clouds are usually moving targets. Wait a minute, it'll be gone. Not this one. 2 hours go by. Same cloud in the same place.

God owns that cloud, and His book tells us He directs the clouds. He tells them where to go and controls the rain drops that either come or do not come. He controls the drought and the flood alike. And for that matter He controls the climate temperature. Just thought I'd throw that in.

Millions of dollars going round and round and round and God has a cloud in the way that obeys His voice. We can't do a thing about it.

Listen to the prophet; Amos 3: *I Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt,*

2 *You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth;
Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.*

3 *Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?*

4 *Does a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey?
Does a young lion growl from his den unless he has captured something?*

*5 Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground when there is no bait in it?
Does a trap spring up from the earth when it captures nothing at all?*

*6 If a trumpet is blown in a city will not the people tremble?
If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?*

If a calamity occurs . . . God the Almighty Sovereign ruler of everything has providentially brought all the pieces and parts together. Not a molecule of creation acts against His will. Not an atomic particle goes rogue against the wishes of the Almighty.

He does no evil. Yet He is sovereign over evil for His own purposes and glory. And we will see God's providential sovereignty at work in the next verse.

12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.

As He approached the gate of the city. Two sizable groups are marching towards each other. One group is happy. Walking 20 miles with Jesus would be such fun. Sooner or later every one gets to talk with Him about whatever they want, as they walk along, and the others would be listening and I'm sure marveling and learning as they went.

The mood of that group would have been positive. An enjoyable day, relaxed speaking and listening, upbeat. I've been on those walks. The day goes by quicker if you're laughing and talking and telling stories.

The other group is as somber of a group as you could find on earth. A mother, well loved as we'll surmise by the size of the group, most everyone in town has clamored around her in her grief.

She is a widow, her husband is dead, but she had a son who would be

her guard and help. That son is her link to stability and wellness in the small community. She has him, at least. And then he dies.

In that land, in that society, that's destitution. Naomi walks back to Israel where at least she can glean a meal from the corners of the fields and not starve to death. That's what's left if your husband has died and your son is now dead. You're destitute. No hope. This was heartbreakingly somber and sad as she leads the procession to the graveyard in front of her one hope, now dead.

The son is placed on a bier which is like the pallet that the friends brought the man with the palsy to Jesus on. It's like a stretcher. Four men are carrying him to the grave on a stretcher. Your version may say coffin, but it isn't a closed box like we have now.

Because of the laws of Moses and the ceremonial un-cleaness of a dead corpse, the jews buried their dead on the day they died. They don't wait. You can read Numbers chapter 19 and see that being in the proximity of a dead corpse made you unclean and it took a week of washings to remedy that.

You couldn't even touch the grave without being ceremonially unclean. So burial was quick. That means this man may have been alive when Jesus started the day long 20 mile journey to Nain.

I want you to see the providence of God in this. Two large groups, diametrically different in mood and purpose, meet each other at the gate of the city. How did that timing happen? Chance?

There's no such thing as chance. The universes did not create and sustain life by chance. Chance is nothing. This timing was in the providential will and purpose and pleasure of the Almighty. He planned it, and He executed it to the second.

The widow is going out at the exact moment that Jesus is going in. God's perfect timing.

13 And when the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her,

That word for compassion is from the root word that means your gut. We're a little less colorful and changed that to our heart. It literally meant inner parts.

There are a million country songs about broken hearts. Gut wrenching emotions sells songs. Jesus sees a weeping mother who is destitute as she leads the procession with her only son to the grave, and it broke His heart.

Did you know God gets emotional over you. His heart is broken over the sin that has trapped you and enslaved you, made you captive to Satan. He felt emotion for a sorrowing jewish mother, and He feels emotion over your sorrows and heart breaks as well.

We find it over and over in the gospels. Jesus felt compassion. At the tomb of Lazarus, He wept. Sin that steals our spiritual life and ultimately our physical life, upsets God. He gets emotional. Jesus was heart broken because of this woman's destitution. All her hopes had just died.

13 And when the Lord saw her,

How does He know her circumstance? He saw her. He chose Nathaniel because He saw him at a distance by a tree. He sees inside mens hearts. He knows . . . everything.

13 And when the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." 14 And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt.

The upbeat happy group meets the sorrowing group at the city gate and Jesus, heart broken over the condition of this poor woman says; *Do not weep.*

Easy for you to say, right? Now if it was us, we might give the lady a hug if we thought it was appropriate and that it might help in some way. Jesus tells her do not weep, and He stops the procession by doing something profoundly shocking to these folks.

He touches the coffin, or as we said, the bier. The pallet. The dead man is laying on this pallet. And Jesus touches it, and the procession comes to a screaming halt.

Now Jesus is dressed in the attire of a Rabbi. We know this from other scriptures. The people address Him as Rabbi. And Rabbi's don't touch coffins, or stretchers with dead people on them. In fact most Rabbi's in Israel would cross to the other side of the road while this deal is going by in order to not become unclean.

Jesus approaches the lady, and sweetly says, stop your weeping. His heartbreak for her heartbreak is apparent. Then He does the unimaginable. He stops the procession by touching the stretcher. The pall bearers immediately stop.

And then, here comes the good part; *And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!"*

You've heard the old joke about Israel having the most resurrections from the dead per capita. Right. Every other nation can boast zero. Israel had at least two that we can think of by the prophets, Elijah, and Elisha.

In both of those cases, the book is clear. They prayed and begged God

to accomplish raising the dead for His glory, and He did it. God breathed life into the two dead people that the prophets rose up. It was God, not the prophets who had the power to raise the dead.

This is different. Look again at the first three words in that sentence; ***And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise!”***

We can picture a bereaved person bent over a dead person speaking. Crying out to them words, whatever those words might be. I love you. Don't leave me, please, I beg you don't leave me. Come back. Whatever. Where did you bury the money?

We've seen it on TV. We can imagine the scenario. But without question, we know, or at least I hope we know, that dead person cannot hear you. Talk all you want. Weep all you want. Say what you want, they can't hear you. Dead people don't hear us.

Even if they did they wouldn't listen. The dead guy in hades begging Abraham to let him go back and tell his brothers to avoid hell. And Abraham explains, even if a dead person went back and spoke, they wouldn't listen.

Dead people can't hear. Except for one voice. When Jesus speaks to dead people, they respond.

John 5:25 - 29 says; ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear shall live. 26 “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 “Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, 29 and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”***

Jesus **says** to Jairus daughter; *talitha cumi*. Little lamb, arise. And she returns from the dead to life. Jesus **says** to Lazarus, dead four days, *Lazarus, come forth!* And Lazarus comes walking out of the tomb wrapped in grave cloths.

The people are so stunned Jesus has to say, Unwrap the poor guy. He isn't dead any more, remove the linens that are holding him back.

And here the voice of Jesus says; “*Young man, I say to you, arise!*” Everything revolves around that voice. When Peter and John healed the lame man at the temple gate what did they say. Rise up and walk. No.

Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee; In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. Jesus is the only one who has the voice to command what only God can command.

The voice of Jesus is the only voice that the dead can hear and must obey.

The voice of Jesus will someday empty every tomb of its dead. Jesus has to be specific when He speaks. He addressed just this one young man. Young man, I say to you arise. If he had just said; *ARISE!* all the tombs would have been emptied.

I'm old enough to remember the TV commercials from the 1970's. One very successful one was; "When E. F. Hutton speaks, people listen." Hate to tell you this, but E. F. Hutton crashed and burned before the big 2008 dust up and someone bought the name for a few bucks. Nobody listens anymore.

But when Jesus of Nazareth speaks, the dead listen and will come back to life to face judgement. All of the dead from all of the ages will respond to that voice. And why not: for Psalm 33 tells us;

*6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
and all the stars by the breath of His mouth.*

*7 He piles up the waters of the sea;
He puts the depths into storehouses.*

Glacial ice caps. He piles up the waters of the sea. Glacial ice caps are God's storehouses. If He needs that water to cover the land some day, it's His. He stored it. He'll use it when and how He wishes.

*8 Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere Him.*

*9 For He spoke, and it came to be;
He commanded, and it stood firm.*

The same voice that did that . . . said; *Young man, I say to thee Arise.* It was a small thing for the voice of God to command.

15 And the dead man sat up, and began to speak.

It occurs to me that Hollywood has cheapened this a little bit for us. We can't help but think of a 1933 Frankenstein coming to life and speaking, and then an endless stream of zombies and who knows what coming back from the dead and creeping us out.

Thanks for that Satan. He always does what he can to cheapen the most dramatic events in the Bible. Three times, real people who were really dead, came back from the dead at the command of Jesus.

It wasn't creepy, but it was incredible. It was shocking. We understand death. They understood death. The spirit goes out of the body and rigor mortis sets in. The warmth departs and cold deadness comes. There's no coming back from that. Death is final. We understand that. With 3

possible exceptions where the voice that will call forth every dead person called out and the people came back to life. *And Jesus gave him back to his mother.*

That indicates that he was whole. Normal. Like yesterday and last week. He doesn't talk funny like a zombie. He doesn't look like Uncle Fester. He has returned to a state of complete normalcy. And Jesus gave him back to his mother. Good as new, like nothing ever happened. Such is the restorative power of the voice of Jesus.

Notice also; There was no faith involved. God simply chose someone to call from death to life according to His sovereign pleasure and He did it. It isn't the faith that caused the new life, it was simply God's sovereign choice

These faith healers that tell people to keep pouring money into the pot like more money equals more faith. Baloney. God chooses what He will do according to His sovereign pleasure, and God does it.

Trust me, the dead have no faith. Eph. 2:1 *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins . . . 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.*

We are the spiritual equivalents of this dead son on the stretcher. God, according to His mercy, calls us from death to life. Because He wants to.

16 And fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people!”

Fear gripped them all. Phobos. We get our word phobia. Arachnaphobia. Fear of spiders. Black widow spiders make my skin

crawl.

Supernatural events that are beyond the predictable normalcy that we define in scientific terms, cause fear. Why is that.

God set up the order that we quantified by science and learning. God set the worlds in motion and they continue in predictable mathematical formulas. We discover the repeatable mathematics of the order of things and we write it down. That is where real science comes from.

There's a lot of phony baloney science going on these days. Good science comes from the repeatable order that God set in motion that we can discover and it's always the same. The numbers are always perfect.

When God puts His power into our repeatable science and something that we cannot see or understand happens, there's no numbers, no way to predict the unknown, science breaks down, it causes the hair on the back of our necks to bristle. It frightens us.

We from time to time experience the fear of how very small and powerless we are against the bigness of whoever it is that spoke the universes into existence with His words, His breath. He is big, I am small. Infinitely.

And then we learn that we have rebelled against Him! That He is furious with us. That His anger burns against the sin of this rebellious world, and that judgement is eminent.

We force that out of our minds. We go about our business. We learn the science of things. We're smart enough to figure this out. Smart people are working on all the problems, right?

And then a man walks up and touches the stretcher with the dead man on it, which we do understand, and says five words. *I say to you arise.*

And he does!! And all of a sudden the dread returns. God is really big. And I'm really really small. And He's mad at me because of sin. And some day, maybe a thousand years after I'm dead, I'll hear that voice saying; *I say to you arise.*

There's good news. That word gospel, means good news. Jesus has addressed our fear. Our phobos.

Isaiah 40:19 says;

-- *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

The solution to fear, is in possessing a righteousness, not your own, God says He'll uphold you, not with your deficient sinful righteousness, but with the righteousness of His right hand.

That's a reference to Jesus. He takes my sin away and Jesus pays the penalty for my sin. Then He gives me the righteousness of Jesus. A righteousness not my own. My sin is imputed onto Jesus. His righteousness is imputed to my account.

That's why in John 14:27 Jesus can say; *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.*

Fear gripped these people as the Son of God in their midst spoke a dead man back to life. That's actually the right response. You should be afraid until this transaction takes place. God built that in. He is big, you are small.

But listen to the apostle John address this idea of the release from guilt and fear in his letter to christians.

1Jn. 4:16 And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because He first loved us.

If we belong to Jesus; If He has come into our hearts and released us from our debt of sin, and we have entered into a love relationship with Him, a personal love relationship with the Saviour, we are released from fear. Dread is replaced by love.

16 And fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people!”

We could spend another morning talking about the responses of the people who witnessed the miracle of Jesus saying words to a dead person and the dead person hearing and obeying.

But we're out of time. Quickly; *“A great prophet has arisen among us!”*

That falls short. That's what the Islamic people say about Jesus. That's what the Mormons say about Jesus. A great prophet.

Prophets don't speak to dead people who both hear and respond. That can only be done if you are God. That is the realm of God, not prophets. That doesn't get it done. People feel they've dignified Jesus by saying He was a great prophet. He is, but He is Oh so much more than that.

and, “God has visited His people!” You're getting warmer. And if somehow some of them understood and believed that this Jesus is in fact

the Son of God, God dwelling with them in a human body, that's closer.

But the words still fall short. If they only mean that God did this magic through Jesus somehow, but he's just an ordinary man, not God, but God used Him to do it. Even that falls short.

Israels problem was that God visited them and they landed short of the realization the Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. God With Us. Most of them saw, and still didn't believe. That's tragic.

17 And this report concerning Him went out all over Judea, and in all the surrounding district.

Our report is that Jesus is God. Jesus speaks and the dead hear and respond. Fear is the right response, until it is replaced by the love of knowing this risen Jesus, intimately and personally, when He takes your sin and gives you His righteousness.