

## The Divine Interruption

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I don't know about you, but one thing that is bound to cause me chaos when I'm doing a job is to be interrupted. Interrupt me during a task and you'll see another side of my character. Why is this? Because in my life I have found that most of my mini-disasters have happened because of a distraction. Whenever I sit down to play the organ at home, I'm just getting into my stride and suddenly the phone rings. And who can resist a ringing phone? Or that time when I'm cooking the dinner and everything is just coming together – the critical moment and the doorbell rings! Last night we were working on the new rota for readers in the church and filling envelopes with Sunday sheets. It's a straight-forward enough job if you follow a system and takes about an hour. But interruptions are not welcome as we don't want the wrong sheet to go into the wrong envelope. Suddenly the doorbell and a young lady.... Well, it was one of those interruptions for which Prestatyn Vicarage was once notorious – it's not so bad now. "I have a problem. You see my grandma is in hospital and I need £10 just until Monday." Now I wouldn't like to tell you how many times I have had that conversation. But I was in a good mood last evening. The task was almost complete so I said to her (truthfully) that I didn't have £10, but I did have a car and would be happy to take her to the hospital to see her grandma.... "Oh well, I don't want to go now, and there's other things that I need to do with the £10...." Goodbye..... Interruptions... GRRRR

I wanted to talk to you today of a Divine Interruption. We read about it in the Gospel for today. The Lord Jesus early in his ministry with a crowd gathered around him, enters the town called Nain. And he encounters a scene not unfamiliar today. A family funeral. Of course this wasn't the sterile affair that we now have. This was another culture and the grief and emotion was raw and out for all to see. And suddenly the Lord Jesus found himself in the thick of things.

Now in the Scriptures we are told of three occasions when the Lord Jesus came face to face with a dead person. There was Lazarus; the 12 year old daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the Synagogue; and this young man. The Bible doesn't tell us anything about him except that he was the only son of a widow. In that culture it was a catastrophe. The woman was on her own now – potentially destitute. Any source of income dried up with the death of her only son. She had already buried her husband – now it was the worst thing that could ever have happened – her son was dead. You can imagine the crowd of mourners gathered around her weeping and wailing as was their wont to do.

Into this miserable scene stepped the Lord Jesus. Uninvited. Probably no one in that funeral party knew who he was and his encounter was unusual to say the least. He did the unthinkable. He interrupted the funeral. Now I've heard of feuding families fighting at funerals. A friend of mine told me that he had conducted a funeral and was told that the police were hiding out in the choir vestry because the family concerned were involved in a notorious feud and that they needed to be present in case of trouble.... On that occasion the trouble didn't materialise but there are other occasions when funerals don't go as smoothly as they should.

So what was the nature of this interruption. The Lord Jesus observed the funeral. He saw the widow's grief and it touched his heart of eternal love. The Bible tells us that he had compassion for her and he said to her "Do not weep". Now this is an unusual thing to say at a funeral for the most natural thing to do is to weep. But Jesus interrupted and told her "do not weep".

When Jesus stepped into a situation uninvited and said "do not weep", then it's because he's going to do something that will dry up your tears. On this occasion Jesus turned her mourning into dancing! "Do not weep" said the uninvited Jesus and when he had finished with that widow and her son, the tears were tears of joy.

Now then....

Everyone of us has known the dark night of the soul. We've known moments of bitter grief and sorrow. Perhaps it was a bereavement; perhaps it was the loss of employment; perhaps it was the break-up of a relationship. Perhaps the doctor came and said "I'm sorry, there's nothing more we can do..." Whatever situation that life may throw up at us, the Lord Jesus is there – closer than a brother – closer than your own arm – and he's there to say "Do not weep". He's there to provide a divine interruption...and he knows what it is to suffer – writing in prophecy 800 years before the birth of the Lord Jesus at Bethlehem, the Prophet Isaiah wrote of him "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows..."

When sorrow strikes your heart like the blow of an axe there stands Jesus – uninvited and ready to step in at a moment's notice. "Do not weep" he says. And then just by the touch of his nail-scarred hand he is there to stand beside you, to bring you through and finally to turn your mourning into dancing.

You know there's coming a day when the Lord Jesus will return again to take us to be with him. The Bible tells us that the eye has not seen, and neither has the ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the wonderful things that God has

planned for those who believe. We're told that sorrow and pain shall be no more, neither shall there be any more tears – for the former things – the things of this world that bring us grief and sorrow will have passed away.... and we will be forever in his love and care.

Let's pray...

Lord Jesus, into the most difficult situations you come uninvited to bring hope and healing. You reveal to us the heart of God as one of compassion and love. And yet, we are so quick to question, so quick to worry, and so slow to believe. Give us the faith to trust your love even in the darkness, even through the pain. And give us the grace to understand that in all things, you continue to shape and form us to be a people for the praise of your glory. We love you Lord and we praise your Name, always and forever. Amen.