

# The Widow's Son



Luke 7:11-17  
Year C Proper 5

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## Parts by scene

■ = large part   ▲ = medium sized part   ● = small part

		1	2	3	4	5
●	<b>Matthew</b> - a former tax collector (i.e. a agent of the Roman occupation of his own people) who in his repentance from that past life is the most religiously fervent of the disciples	▲				
■	<b>Judas</b> - possibly the deepest thinker and best organizer, the one who usually sees the big picture most clearly, and also the disciple with the best sense of humor	▲	●		▲	▲
▲	<b>Peter</b> - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room	▲	●		▲	
▲	<b>James</b> - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)	●	▲		▲	
▲	<b>John</b> - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples	●	●			▲
●	<b>Jesus</b>	●			●	▲
▲	<b>Widow</b> - the distraught mother of a young man who's just been killed by the Romans		▲			
▲	<b>Woman</b> - a citizen of the town		▲		▲	
▲	<b>Man</b> - a citizen of the town		▲		▲	
▲	<b>Thomas</b> - the skeptic, who really wants to believe because of his emotional bond with the others, but can't simply ignore his doubts			▲		▲
▲	<b>Boy</b> - a friendly and talkative young boy from the town			■		
●	<b>Phillip</b> - one of the youngest disciples, always well-meaning and honestly curious, sometimes lacking in confidence					▲
●	<b>Young Man</b> - the Widow's son					●

## Scene 1

James , Jesus , John , Judas , Matthew , Peter

*{Jesus and the disciples approach the gates of the city of Nain.}*

**Matthew** *[out of breath]* Finally!

**Judas** *[jokingly]* What's the matter? Pooped already?

**Matthew** I feel like we've walked twenty miles today!

**Peter** *[loudly boasting]* This is nothing. I used to walk this far all the time - after a long day of fishing! Sometimes with a load of fish I had to get to the next town before it went bad. I think I'm getting out of shape, we sit around so much. I guess you didn't get much exercise when you were -

*{Awkward silence.}*

**James** When he was a tax collector, stealing money from his own people.

**John** James!

**Matthew** *[calmly accepting his punishment]* It's all right. That's what I was.

**Peter** *[cheerfully]* But you repented. You're with us now. Don't beat yourself up over the past.

**Judas** *[joking]* What you should beat yourself up about is the fact that even Phillip is out-walking you!

**Peter** *[good naturedly]* Hey, Phillip's doing fine! *[to Phillip]* Aren't you?

*{Phillip, who is winded, can only wave back weakly.}*

**John** Well, now that we're here, we can all rest. Does anyone know the way to the house we're staying in?

**Judas** I think it's just on the other side of *that*.

*{A huge crowd is completely blocking the main gate of the city. The group is stopped dead in its tracks.}*

**Matthew** It looks like a funeral.

**Peter** And a big one. Look at all those people! It must've been some bigshot. We'll never squeeze past that crowd.

**James** We don't have time to stand around gawking at a parade. Let's go around to the south gate.

**Matthew** No! Please! Couldn't we just wait?

**Peter** *[cheerfully]* Come on, Matthew! If you wimp out now, what are you going to do when the going gets really tough? Tell him, rabbi!

*{A long pause as Jesus stares silently at the funeral procession.}*

**John** Rabbi?

**Judas** Rabbi, that crowd is blocking our way. We'd like to go around to a side gate, but -

**Jesus** *[interrupting him]* We'll stay.

## Scene 2

James , John , Judas , Man , Peter , Widow , Woman

*{Jesus and the disciples stand with a crowd at the gates, watching the funeral procession with the Widow at its head. A man and his wife stand nearby.}*

**Widow** *[chanting a psalm of grief as she leads the procession]*  
My soul wanders through a dark land  
The shadow world beneath the world  
The realm dreaded by all the living  
And yet: the one I loved is here

**John** *[to the couple standing nearby]* Who died, her husband?

**Woman** Her son. Her husband died just last year.

**Peter** My God, that's rough.

**Woman** The worst of it is, they both went the same way.

**John** Some kind of disease?

**Man** You could say that. It was the Romans.

**James** Curse them!

**Judas** James, be careful! Someone will overhear.

**Man** *[with an edge in his voice]* Don't worry. The Romans have no friends in this city.

**Woman** That's why the crowd is so big. We come out to support every martyr.

**Widow** He must abide here forever now  
Among the shades of those who once lived  
With his father who came here before him  
And waited for him too short a time

**Peter** How'd it go down?

**Man** They were in the Resistance, father and son. The old man tried to steal a payroll delivery, and the kid got caught in a meeting that was raided.

**James** *[suddenly excited]* The rabbi should speak to the crowd! It's perfect. This is why we're here!

**John** I don't know, James. This is a private funeral.

**Judas** *[taking James' side]* It's more than a private funeral. That boy and his father died fighting for our freedom, and that's what we're fighting for, too.

**Peter** Makes sense to me. How about it, John? The rabbi could inspire them to keep up the fight.

**James** *[to the Man]* Sir? Our rabbi over there...we believe he is the salvation of Israel, the promised one who will lead us to freedom. We've been following him for months now. Could he speak to the people at the graveside?

**Man** Him? The messiah? He doesn't look like much. But if he believes in our cause, I suppose he could speak. You'd have to ask permission from the family.

**Woman** From the widow. She's all the family that's left.

**Widow** Yet, when they meet each other in the dim street  
They will not know each other  
Though I follow them far from my empty home  
They do not know I'm here

### Scene 3

Boy , Thomas

*{Thomas has wandered off, and meets a boy from the town.}*

**Thomas** Hello, there.

**Boy** Hi.

**Thomas** Should you be wandering on your own like this?

**Boy** I come here all the time. But this time, my mom told me to come here. I don't think she wants me to see the funeral. She wanted me to stay home at first, but I said no way.

**Thomas** Are you sorry you're missing the funeral?

**Boy** I don't care. We have a lot of them.

**Thomas** That's rough.

**Boy** Last month, we had a funeral for my friend's uncle, and I got to go and stand with him in the line.

**Thomas** Uh, cool.

*{An awkward pause.}*

**Boy** What do you think happens to people when they die?

**Thomas** Wow. *[struggles for a moment over whether to give a "correct" answer or to be honest]* I have no idea.

**Boy** Really?

**Thomas** I really don't.

**Boy** My mom says they all go to this dark, dead place called *[mispronouncing it]* "shield," and they have to just lie there waiting for the last day, but I think that would suck.

**Thomas** I agree. Where do you think they *should* go?

**Boy** I want to go to a big, bright place where you never have to go to bed and you can run for five miles and not get tired, and when you stop, you aren't even breathing hard and you can run another five miles right away. And I think there should be games - but fair ones, not ones where the big kids make all the rules. And people

shouldn't have to die again, or if they do, they go to an even better place after that, and then a better place after that, and then a better place after that, on and on forever.

**Thomas** That sounds great. Can I come, too?

**Boy** Have you been good?

**Thomas** *[after a pause]* I have no idea!

#### Scene 4

James , Jesus , Judas , Man , Peter , Woman

*{The Window, weeping, is brought to Jesus.}*

**Man** *[to the Widow]* This is the man. They say he's a great teacher and - and perhaps an important leader in our cause.

*{The Window continues crying, ignoring Jesus, who stands before her with his head bowed.}*

**Woman** *[to the Widow]* He wishes to speak to the crowd. Won't you talk with him?

*{She continues crying. Jesus remains silent.}*

**James** Ma'am? We believe our rabbi is more than just a great teacher or leader. We believe he is the One that God has promised would come, for the salvation of Israel!

*{She continues crying.}*

**Judas** I'm sorry for your loss. My own brother died only last month, also fighting for our cause. I wish every day that I could have saved him. If I had gotten word of his injuries in time, perhaps our rabbi could have healed him. He's a miraculous healer. But he's gone, and all I can do now - all *we* can do now - is carry on. Won't you let the rabbi speak? He can comfort the crowd, and inspire them to keep fighting!

*{Still no reaction from either the Widow or Jesus.}*

**Man** *[beginning to get a little impatient]* Look, if this "messiah" of yours won't even speak on his own behalf, maybe we'd better forget about this.

**Peter** Rabbi, speak to her! Tell her!

**Jesus** *[finally raising his head to look her in the eye]* Please...don't cry.

*{There is a long pause during which the Widow continues to cry and the others wait for Jesus to say more.}*

**Woman** *[angrily]* That's it? "Please don't cry"? She loses a husband and then a son, and you tell her that all she needs to do is just stop crying? You men are all alike! You fight your wars and commit your murders and when women's grief gets in the way of your fancy speeches, you tell us to quiet down!

**Man** *[speaking to both the disciples and the crowd]*  
You said you were in the same fight we were, but you're clearly pretenders. We fight, we suffer loss, and we mourn our losses! You're opportunists! Trying to gain unearned glory from our struggle!

**Woman** *[to Jesus]* You're a horrible man!

*{They storm off, taking the Widow with them, and the crowd begins to murmur angrily.}*

**James** *[angrily defending his master]* You people should be ashamed of yourselves! Our master has done more good to more people than you'll ever know! And he *is* the messiah! He will rule a redeemed nation some day, and we will sit by his side!

*{Jesus begins walking toward the dead body.}*

**Judas** James! Take it easy!

**Peter** Rabbi? Where are you going?

**James** Rabbi! Rabbi, come back!

*{Jesus lays his hands upon the body of the dead boy, causing the crowd to gasp and become even more angry, but just as it looks like violence might break out, the boy rises. The crowd cheers.}*

**Peter** I can't believe it! I can't believe it!

**James** *[to the crowd]* You see? You see?

**Judas** *[incredulously to himself]* He can raise the dead?

**Peter** I would never have believed it if I hadn't seen it. Where's Thomas? He'll never believe it!

**James** *[shouting for joy]* Why shouldn't we believe it? Why shouldn't the rabbi be able to do anything he wishes?

**Judas** *[in a subdued voice]* Including raising the dead.

*{The Man and Woman from before hasten back to the disciples.}*

**Man** Sirs, please forgive my doubt.

**Woman** The funeral meal is prepared, but now it will be a celebration. Please join us.

**Peter** A party! I'll go find the others. Rabbi! Come on!

*{Everybody moves off, except for Judas and Jesus. Jesus remains kneeling at the spot from which he raised the boy. Judas turns to gaze at Jesus.}*

**Judas** *[grimly, but too softly for Jesus to hear, more to himself than anything]* You can raise the dead!

## Scene 5

Jesus , John , Judas , Phillip , Thomas , Young Man

*{Judas remains outside the gates. Jesus remains kneeling next to the bier where the dead boy lay. John and Phillip enter.}*

**John** Judas, aren't you coming?

**Phillip** There's going to be a party! And we're going to be the guests of honor. Well, the rabbi is, anyway. *[Calling to Jesus.]* Rabbi! Come on!

**Judas** I'm not feeling well. I think I'll go straight to the house.

**Phillip** Rabbi! *[to the others]* What's he doing?

**John** *[to Judas]* What's the matter?

**Thomas** *[entering]* Where'd everybody go? What happened to the funeral?

**Phillip** Thomas, you missed it!

**Thomas** Missed what?

**Phillip** The rabbi healed the boy.

**Thomas** What boy?

**John** You didn't see what happened?

**Thomas** I took a little walk. I don't really like funerals.

**Phillip** You should have stayed. The funeral was canceled!

**Thomas** What?

**John** The rabbi healed the dead boy.

**Thomas** That's amazing. So he wasn't really dead?

**Judas** *[grimly]* He was dead. I'm sure of it. I know the look of a dead body. The rabbi can raise the dead.

**Phillip** You don't sound very happy about it.

**Thomas** Well, you must admit, it's pretty unbelievable. I know: I'm the doubter, but wow! I can't doubt what I saw with my own eyes!

**Judas** Look, I don't want to talk about it. I'm going to the house.

**John** *[realizing what's bothering Judas]* Judas, I see now! But I'm sure he would have if he could have. There must have been some reason why he couldn't.

**Thomas** Who couldn't? Couldn't what?

*{Jesus, who finally got up from beside the bier, comes over to join the group.}*

**Judas** *[accusingly to Jesus]* So. You can raise the dead.

**Jesus** *[calmly]* So it seems.

**Judas** Have you always been able to?

**Jesus** I am what I am.

**Judas** *[angrily]* We got there only a day after he died. He had been dead no longer than this boy today. He died in the same way: run through by a Roman sword. You did nothing, because what was there to do? We arrived too late. Except we didn't, or "so it seems."

You could have saved him after all, but you didn't!

**Phillip** *[to John]* Who's he talking about?

**John** His brother.

**Phillip** Oh my God, I forgot!

**John** Rabbi, was the boy not really dead? Or was there some reason you were able to raise him when you couldn't raise - when you haven't been able to raise anybody else?

*{A long pause while Jesus remains silent.}*

**Thomas** Aren't you going to answer? We're not doubting your power; we just want to know.

**John** Rabbi?

*{The Widow's son dashes up to the group.}*

**Young Man** *[gushing gratitude]* Sir? I came back to thank you. They said I was...dead.

**Jesus** Are you glad to be alive again?

**Young Man** Are you kidding?

**Jesus** *[to Judas]* And you, are you glad he's alive again?

**Judas** Yes. Of course.

**Jesus** Do you wish to leave my service?

**Judas** No! I never said anything about that.

**Jesus** Then follow me, and you will see greater wonders yet!

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You can read my thoughts about this play and respond with your own at  
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