I want to talk about Jesus today, which is always a great topic at church. But I wonder sometimes how much we really know Jesus. How much do we really know who he is and what he's like. As I said before, we started Grace Hills with the intent of reaching out to people who don't yet know him. So it's not necessarily that we planted a church to reach experts in the Bible or people who were professionals in the faith or people who were experts at things or people who were already perfect. Jesus even said if you're already healthy, you don't need a physician. And if you think you're righteous, you probably don't think you need a redeemer.

But we planted Grace Hill's knowing that thousands and thousands of people don't know Jesus, don't have a relationship with Jesus. Don't know what Jesus is like. I'm convinced that today in America and in northwest Arkansas, that people often have a lot of misunderstandings about who God is, about who his son Jesus is, about what the church is. And sometimes those misunderstandings come because we've created a bit of a Christian culture of our own that may or may not always reflect life in Jesus' day or what it was like to really know Jesus. Sometimes we sort of add in a lot of our own kind of cultural attachments to Christianity.

There are moments where I just want to strip it away and set aside everything I think I know, and just come back to the scriptures and go okay, who is Jesus really? If I really want to get to know him, if I want to know what he's like, if I want to know what Jesus stood for, what Jesus fought for, what Jesus died for, what he rose again from the grave for, I want to know who Jesus is and what he's all about, I go back to scripture and I start looking at the stories of how he interacted with people.

We've been in this series of messages called Miraculous and we're looking through some of the miracles of Jesus, his life. We've talked about some that kind of highlight his power, his ability. Last week you guys heard from Pastor Sean about the feeding of the 5,000. We're going to be talking about moments in Jesus' life that lead right up to the cross and then the resurrection. And we're going to talk about multiple miracles from Jesus' life, but today I want to talk about a miracle in Jesus' life that he performed, that doesn't necessarily, it isn't all about the power of God.

Now, don't misunderstand, the power of God is certainly involved, but I want to talk about something a little different, in a different angle from which you see this story. Today we're going to talk about what happens when Jesus sees you in pain, when Jesus sees you in pain.

I want to read a story out of the book of Luke Chapter Seven. Jesus, early in his ministry, was traveling from place to place and often found himself interrupting and ruining funerals. And that's what happens in this particular case. And just for cultural background, you need to understand that in our day we celebrate funerals a certain way. I've lived in southern California and I've lived here and I've lived in Kentucky.

It's interesting to me that there's certain cultural things that we understand here and do here that aren't done everywhere. In southern California there was less burials or more cremations. A lot of times you'd have a memorial service three or four weeks after someone passed. Whereas it seems like here in the south we often have a funeral within two to three days, there's a casket. And so those are just differences. I know in Kentucky and here in Arkansas, when a funeral possession drives by, what do you do? You stop and get off to the side of the road. You don't do that in southern California. You get run over to people. People are like yeah, you know?And so it's just these sort of cultural differences from one place to another.
Well, if you rewind 2,000 years, you need to understand that funerals in Jesus' day were similar to weddings. When we talked about Jesus turning the water into wine at the wedding in Caina of Galilee, we mentioned that the wedding was a six or seven day long celebration. It was a festival. Lots of people came. Funerals were similar in that lots of people would turn out, lots of people who weren't part of the funeral at all. I remember my great grandmother, one of the sweetest people that's ever walked this planet, when she got on up in years, she got this new hobby and we were all intrigued by it. She would just go to funerals. There was a funeral home nearby and she'd just stop in and see who's died lately and she'd attend these funerals. We'd be like well, did you know them? Well, kind of. My cousin worked with somebody that used to know him and I just thought I'd go support them, you know? People would do that in Jesus' day. They'd just go out and support whoever it was. And sometimes the funeral celebration itself would go on for awhile. The procession would be walked through the middle of the town square so that the public could come and take moments of quiet and support the family. So just keep all that in mind as we read this story and think about Jesus and his disciples, again, showing up at a kind of crashing a public event.

So in John Chapter 2:1-11, that's not correct. It's actually Luke. Anyways, it says this. Soon afterward, Jesus went with his disciples to the village of Nieen and a large crowd followed him. A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow's only son. A large crowd from the village was with her. Now remember, they may or may not have known her, but they're there to mourn for her.

When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. Don't cry, he said. Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it and the bearers stopped. Young man, he said, I tell you, get up. Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Great fear swept the crowd. They praised God saying a mighty prophet has risen among us and God has visited his people today and the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding countryside.

Now there's certainly this kind of obvious side of the miracle. Jesus can raise the dead. He can work any miracle he wants. He is the power of life and death and resurrection and all of eternity is in his hands. He is God in the flesh. He's God on earth and so he is capable and able of doing anything. So his power is certainly on display. I think that's what the crowd noticed that day. They see Jesus walk up and sort of move people out of the way and walk right up and the bearers, the pallbearers, stop. They're usually carrying the coffin on their shoulders. They stop and Jesus reaches out and touches it.

Now think about just the sort of difficulty of doing something like that. Can you imagine interrupting the procession while everyone's eyes are turning to you? What is this guy up to? And he walks right up and he touches that coffin and the boy comes back to life and the crowd that day is amazed. Then they're afraid. They're awe struck by the power and the glory of God. I can't believe what Jesus just did. Did you see that?

And we read the story and a lot of times what we notice is the miracle itself. We notice the act of Jesus raising this boy from the dead and we go my, how powerful Jesus is. Look at his ability, look what Jesus can do.

But what catches my attention in the story that I think we overlook if we're not careful, something that crowd probably didn't really notice that day is how Jesus interacted with the widow herself. There's an
interesting thing that comes up in this story that repeats itself throughout Jesus' ministry. I want to talk for a minute about how Jesus interacts with us on our worst possible days, in the moments of life that are hardest, when we're in pain, when we're suffering for the heart of this widow, the Bible I think highlights and points out that she's a widow because not only had her husband pass but her son had passed and that meant that she not only no longer had her loved ones with her, but she didn't have a support system anymore, in the ancient world. She couldn't just run out and get a job now. There was no public program like Social Security to take care of her. Nothing is left for her and so her son is going to care for her financially throughout the rest of her life and now her son is gone too. And so she is having not only a bad bad day in terms of her loss, but facing the future and wondering about the uncertainty.

And so Jesus comes and interacts with her in a pretty special way. What I want to do this morning is just draw out how Jesus feels about you when you're in pain, how he interacts with people when they're in pain. Then what I ultimately want to do is guide us into thinking about how we're going to do this for some other people.

The first thing I want you to see and notice about the story is this. Jesus sees you when you're in pain. He sees you when you're in pain. He notices this widow in the funeral procession. He sees her, the Bible talks about he saw the procession, he involved himself in it. He sees her in her pain.

Now I think that some of us, what we want is for Jesus to fix it all. We're looking for my miracle, so to speak. That I'm in pain, I'm walking through difficulty, I'm walking through uncertainty about the future. I've gone through a loss. And what we often want from God is for God to come and take that pain away or fix the problem or stop death from happening to us in the first place or stop us from experiencing loss. We want Jesus to fix the circumstance, to fix the problem.

In this particular case, Jesus fixed the problem. He brought this boy back to life, but he didn't do that for everyone. He didn't do it for very many people. This boy went on and died again, which had to be strange for him to wake up to begin with. Then later this entire generation passes away. So Jesus was not preventing death for all of the people at this funeral. He was just for this moment in time correcting and fixing this situation for this one woman. Sometimes we look at Jesus and we go well, if Jesus is really good, if he's really faithful, he'll do that for me. He'll fix all my problems. He'll correct all the errors in my life. He'll put back what I've lost. He'll keep me from pain. But I think we missed sometimes a bigger story, that when Jesus doesn't fix our pain, he gets involved in it. He sees her in her pain.

Have you ever felt invisible before? I felt that way at different times in my life. When I walk into a room, sometimes in a certain scenario, certain situation and I just feel like, I'm just not sure if anybody knows or understands me. Like maybe you're struggling with something and you walk into church on a Sunday morning, you might walk into Grace Hills and your feelings of, you're going through some things, you've got big questions on your mind or big pain in your life or you're dealing with loss and suffering. And you're wondering why isn't God showing up and fixing things the way I want him to? You're struggling and you might walk in and everyone else in the room seems to be focused on praising God, singing and smiling at each other and greeting one another. You might feel like your invisible, unnoticed, unseen, like your pain isn't caught.

There's a TED Talk by a guy who traveled to San Francisco to take his own life and he took a bus ride of the Golden Gate Bridge and was going to jump and a police officer tried to get him not to. He wound up
jumping. Anyways, he survived it. He's one of the very few people who survived the experience. It broke a lot of his ribs and his bones. It nearly killed him, but he survived and now he's able to tell the story of his desperation that day.

And in his story, one of the things that caught my attention as he said when he got on the bus that day, he remembers looking around at all the people sitting on that bus and in his mind kind of thinking or praying somehow, someone, please notice me. Someone stop me, please. And as he got off the bus that day, he remembers making eye contact with the bus driver and almost begging with his eyes, please say something, please stop me. Then he got off the bus and no one had stopped him and he went on.

Now he was careful. He doesn't blame any of those people. That's just life. He understands and knows that it's not a practical expectation to expect other people to notice completely secret thoughts in our heads. But it's that feeling of man, I just want someone to know that I'm in pain. And what I see over and over in the Bible in Jesus' life is that he's the kind of Jesus, he's the kind of God who sees you when no one else sees you. So when all those thoughts are going through your head, Jesus knows them and hears them and he hurts with you. He sees you. He understands what you're going through. He saw this widow.

And here's the thing, you got to remember, nobody else really sees the widow. Women in Jesus' day were not considered as significant or noticeable as men. And we know that's wrong. But that was a cultural situation in which she found herself. So it wasn't that people were going to take notice of her and take care of her, but Jesus did. And he stepped in and he saw her. Not only did he see her, but there's a second thing that you got to know about Jesus. Jesus feels your pain, he feels your pain. He tells her not to cry and then he stops the procession and touches the coffin. And there's this side of Jesus by which we kind of see them get involved in the moment, he involves himself in the moment.

Now for a lot of us, the easiest thing to do is just walk on by and maybe do our very best to like say a prayer. Like I'll just shoot up a prayer for that stranger over there. But Jesus instead is moved in certain ways in. And you see this coming up throughout Jesus' life, throughout Jesus' ministry where he is moved with compassion for the crowds that can't eat, that don't have food. He's moved with compassion over the people who are trapped between Rome and a temple gone rogue and they're there in the middle searching for God and nobody's really pointing them in the right direction to the God of the Bible. They've just got this sort of other religion or secularism. And so Jesus, his heart breaks over people that are in that situation. This heart is moved continually. And we see that coming out here. We see it coming out in so many different stories that Jesus is moved by our situation.

So again, you might feel sometimes invisible, like you're struggling with all these secret thoughts and nobody knows. But you can know that Jesus knows, that he's in your head when no one else is, that he's there, that he's aware, that he understands and that he is moved by your pain, by your situation.

In the book of Hebrews Chapter Four, the Bible kind of tells us about Jesus' present role, his present ministry. And in Hebrews 4:14 in the Bible says this. We don't have a priest, speaking of Jesus, who is out of touch with our reality. He has been through weakness and testing. He has experienced it all, all but the sin. So let's walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.

In other words, Jesus walked through all of the pain, all of the difficulty, all of the rejection, the embarrassment, the abandonment, the false accusation. Jesus walked through everything we could
possibly walk through in terms of pain and suffering, the physical pain, the loss of his very life on the cross. Jesus has gone through all of that and then risen again and ascended to God. And he serves as a high priest to whom we can go. And this high priest is not someone who's aloof and hiding perhaps, behind some wall of or stuck in an ivory tower. No, this high priest has walked among us. He's felt it all. He feels it all and he's here and he's moved by your pain. He's touched by your infirmities. His heart breaks over what you're walking through.

Now, again, I know that some of us might ask the question why doesn't he just fix it? Why doesn't he just stop the pain? Why doesn't he keep evil from happening? Why doesn't he just stop people from doing bad things? And the reality is he could. He's an all powerful God. So at any moment that God wishes to, he could just put a stop to all of the madness. He could put down nations that oppress other nations. He could wipe out powers that take advantage of other people. He could just wipe us off the face of the map if he wanted to. He's God. He could put a stop to all the evil. He can stop the bad things from happening if he wanted to. He could certainly step in at any moment and control us if that were his desire. He could make us not do bad things. He could make us all do good things. He could make us love him. He could make us worship him. He could make us treat each other with respect and make all the right best choices. He could make us. But a God who makes us do all of those things isn't a God who is freely giving of will and of grace and of free agency.

And so he gives us this world. He gives us this earth, this planet, and he certainly sovereignly protects us through certain things. He certainly moves and acts in certain places and catches our attention in the way God spares this person from this difficult situation or accident. How in the world did they walk away? And God works in that way sometimes. Nations fall at times. Oppressors fall, and God is certainly involved in all of that. And yet God continues to let us have a world where there is free will and we're all victims of our own free will.

We all live in a world of pain and suffering and a large part of that pain and suffering is a result of what we as humanity have caused, that we divide from each other. We hate one another. We struggle for power over one another. We oppress each other. That's what we do as humans. And we live in a world where God could certainly stop it. And yet God is giving us the opportunity to freely choose to escape it for all of eternity and to love him and to be redeemed, to be saved, to be forgiven, to be changed, to be made brand new. So he gives this opportunity and he feels the pain that we're in. In other words, it's not that he's oblivious.

One of the problems that we sometimes have with God is why doesn't God fix it? Well, here's why it doesn't fix it, because he has given us this wonderful gift of free agency so we can choose to know him and to love him. But what does he do? He does get involved in feeling our pain. He doesn't always fix it, but he definitely feels it. And Jesus over and over demonstrates that in his life.

So if you don't know Jesus, if you don't really know who he is very well, then you may not have discovered this yet, that he feels with you. He's both sympathetic, that is, he feels for you and he's empathetic. He feels with you. And both of those things are true of him.

But there's a third thing he does. He does act on your pain. He does move when you're in pain. Sometimes he raises the dead, and we see that in scripture, but he doesn't always do that, does he? Sometimes he heals illness, but he doesn't always do that. He doesn't always do that in history or else we'd be even more overpopulated than we are. No one would ever die. And so we live on a planet
where we still suffer the physical effects of sin's existence and the brokenness and the decay of planet earth and all of that. We still walk through all of that. That doesn't mean though that he doesn't act. He does actually act. Even when he doesn't fix things the way I want him to, even when he doesn't fix the situation in the way that I've asked him to, he's still acting on our behalf.

I want to highlight the way Jesus acts in the life of this woman because it's out of this, I want to draw a big lesson for us today and kind of send us out of here as like missionaries doing what Jesus did. What Jesus does for her, he did for one person after another after another in the New Testament. He gave her three things. He acted in her life, giving her three things that he gives repeatedly, that he gives in our lives today. He gave her a look. He gave her a word and he gave her a touch. He involves himself in this situation and he sees her. He looks at her, he sees the boy, he looks at him. He speaks to her. He talks to her. He ministers to her with his words, don't cry, don't be in pain. Then he reaches out and touches that coffin and touches that boy, raising him back from death to life and gives him back to her. He involves himself in the situation with a look and a word and a touch.

Now I just want you to pretend for just a second that you don't know anything about Jesus, that you've not spent your life in church or the last year in church or however long you've been in church. You don't have the Sunday school knowledge of the Bible stories. You've never seen a flannel graph in your life. You have zero knowledge of Jesus. All you have is someone coming to you and opening a New Testament and starting to read to you about this man, this God man, this God in the flesh who came and walked among us. And the first four books of the New Testament are going to tell you on repeat about his death and his resurrection and the promise of his second coming and his commission to the church. And those first four books of the New Testament are going to tell you story after story of Jesus' interaction with people, at least 36 different miracles that Jesus performs in the lives of people. And John goes on to say there aren't enough books to contain all of the mighty works that Jesus performed.

What you're going to know about Jesus if you're starting from scratch, is Jesus sees us in our pain. He gets involved, he acts, he gives over and over a look, a word and a touch. You're going to see that when a crowd is surrounding him and everyone's clamoring to get some healing from Jesus. And the Bible says there's this woman with an issue of blood just reaches out and touches the hem of his garment. And he felt that. Well, everybody's got their hands on Jesus in that moment, but he felt her and he speaks to her and he touches her and heals her in that moment. That Jesus over and over throughout the New Testament is giving people a look, a word and a touch.

In other words, if you don't know who God is and you start reading the New Testament and you interpret who got is by what you discover about Jesus, you're going to know that God is not in some far off distant, separate universe out there, uncaring and uninvolved about what's going on here on earth. You're not going to find a God who is divorced from the reality that we live in. You're not going to find a God who doesn't care about your pain or about your problems, and you're also not going to find a God who is unable to fix the issues that we face. What you're going to encounter instead is the God who is certainly able, but even more importantly than that, looks right into your life, right into your pain, right into your struggle, right into your suffering and gives you a look, a word and a touch.

So when you think back to those most painful, difficult moments of your life to those life shaping, sometimes destructive, harmful abuses and moments that you've walked through and you wondered, does God even care? Does God even notice? What the Bible presents is a God who absolutely does. Who was there, who was with you, who saw, who keeps a record of righteousness, who understands
right and wrong, the ultimate judge of all the earth, the powerful creator who could step in and fix any situation he desires, but allows us to continue on making decisions and choices often that affect each other and very negative ways, but still does not abandon us, doesn't take his hands off. Doesn't say well guys, you've messed up the planet. Y'all just go on and do your thing. Instead stays right here, hurting over the mess, hurting over the mess.

When my boys, they get these LEGO sets and LEGO sets have changed a lot. When I was a kid, you just bought a big old box of LEGOs and you built stuff. And there were only like four kinds of blocks anyways. But you'd create things and you'd build houses and villages and whatever. Nowadays you go to the store and there's a box of LEGOs that build one very specific thing. There's a plan for how this must go together. And if you get one little flat two block piece out of place, you got to back up and just take it all apart again. Because by the time you start with this LEGO kit, which are like $1,000 for a motorbike. And so you've got the kit fully assembled and all the pieces in place. I love that moment when we're done and we close the little instruction book and now we've got this little tiny land speeder and Luke Skywalker's in it. I get to hand that to my boys, here's completed. What's the first thing they do? Destroy it. And never again will those pieces go back together the right way, never.

And so God creates this plan and he says here, paradise, Eden, you get this. I'm going to water it for you. I'm going to create weather cycles and you're going to breathe well and it's going to water the, I just want you to till it and to keep it, to manage and to protect the garden and to work the soil. So paradise, here, it's yours. I just got one rule. Just one block that you don't need to pull out, one tree, one fruit you don't need to eat. And immediately, well we don't know immediately, but what was sometime shortly thereafter, Adam and Eve are eating of the forbidden fruit. The one thing God said not to do and he watches the creation just begin to crumble.

And what we sometimes interpret is that God has gotten frustrated and has taken his hands off and doesn't care anymore. Or we put a demand on God. If you were really God, you'd come fix it for us again. You'd make right all that we have made wrong in this world. And what God does instead is to say this is your world for now. He's still the God over all of creation. Absolutely. Never ceases to be sovereign. But he says there's a whole system of thinking that has been developed by the evil one. This whole system of thinking that humanity embraces sometimes and it edges God out and removes them from the equation.

But instead of abandoning at all, he says you know what? I am fixing it. I am restoring it. And for all of eternity, it's going to be made right. It's going to be made right. And instead of improving the mess that you're in, instead of just tweaking here and there to try to make earth more habitable forever, I'm going to fix it all. So he speaks of this new heaven and this new earth with no more pain and no more tears and no more sorrow and no more disease and no more abuse and no more oppression, and it'll all be gone. He says I want to save you out of where you're at and I want to take you for eternity. But right now, in the present season, while you're still here hurting, God wants you to know I still see you. I still feel with you, and I'm still going to give you a look, a word and a touch.

So let me just close with these two quick challenges. The first is simply this. If you don't know Jesus, if you don't know God, I want to challenge you today to begin to see him through the eyes of scripture. You can decide that he's far off and doesn't care. But that isn't biblical. You cannot embrace the Bible and believe in a disengaged God. So instead to embrace that God is here, that he knows your thoughts,
that he sees your pain, that he feels with you, that he works on your behalf. That's who God is. That's who he is.

But also I want to give you another challenge. If you're sitting in this room and you have believed in Jesus, you have a relationship with him, you now have a mission. You now live in a world where there are thousands and thousands of people and you'll bump into some of them this week at Walmart, at restaurants, at the workplace, you'll run into them everywhere. They desperately need a look, a word and a touch. Jesus physically is not here present to do that, but he is present. Guess how? Through you, through me, through us. And when we give people a look, a word, a touch, a cup of cold water in Jesus' name, we represent this God who cares? that's what he shows us in this miracle, he cares about where you're at. Let's bow our heads.

Father, I pray right now for perhaps somebody in this room that still comes with a sense of skepticism because of their pain, because of their hurt, that at this moment they just can't embrace that you love them, that you value them, that you see them, that you minister to them and God, I pray in Jesus' name the you just overwhelm their heart in this moment. Give them that look, that word, that touch, move their heart to know that your heart is moved for them.

Lord, I pray that in this moment a relationship would be born, would begin. If you're listening to me pray and you don't know Jesus and you want to come to know him today, you want to meet this God who sees you, who feels with you, it's simply a matter of saying Jesus, I confess my sin. I repent of my sin. I trust in Jesus Christ as the one and only savior and redeemer who gave his life on a cross so that I could be forgiven and set free, and I embrace Jesus as my savior today.

If you're here and you're a believer and you're hurting, and just wonder, where is God right now? Believe by faith that he's listening, that he sees, that he knows, that he cares. You may not always feel that emotionally, but it's true because it's true forever in scripture. You just pray, Jesus, remind me that you love me, that you see me.

And maybe you're a believer and you wonder what's my mission, what's my purpose? What am I here for? It's this. There's somebody in your life this week who's going to need a look, who's going to need a word, who's going to need a touch. Father send us. We love you. We praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.