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-- In both the Old Testament and New Testament, we hear numerous pleas to care for orphans and widows. Children without parents are obviously in need of care. In a time when many mothers died in childbirth and life expectancy was low, orphans were numerous.

-- In biblical times, widows were in a sorry position. They didn't inherit their husband's wealth. A widow's son was supposed to take care of her. Lacking sons, she was a virtual non-person in society. She had to beg or sell herself

-- Our scriptures today tell the story of two widows whose only sons died, leaving them in a sorry state. The first widow had offered hospitality to Elijah. Understandably, she was angry when God took her son from her despite her goodness to a stranger. For a moment she was even tempted to blame Elijah for her troubles.

-- But Elijah had compassion for her, took her son in his arms and prayed to God. And the boy was restored to life. The widow had her son back, and her life had a glimmer of hope.

-- Jesus encountered a funeral procession as he came into a town called Nain, a name which means "peaceful." But it was hardly peaceful there that day. A widow was going to bury her only son. Since it was the Jewish custom to bury someone before sundown the day he died, this had all come about so quickly.

-- Jesus didn't need anyone to ask him for help. He knew what was needed in this situation. He went up and told the woman *Do not weep*.

-- Now, if I said that during a funeral procession, it would be terribly insensitive. After all, this woman had lost everything of value to her: What was she going to do? But Jesus was going to do something wonderful.

-- When he restored the life of the young man, he not only restored his life. He gave new life to his mother who was good as dead without the support of her son.

- In this action, Jesus showed compassion to someone in the depths of sorrow. He gave a new lease on life to a woman who was on the bottom rung of her society.
- He challenges us to reach out to the “non-persons” of our own day. We may not have that many orphans in America currently.
- But we have many young people who fall victim to slavery in the sex industry. Some are very young in fact. Many are lured by the promise of good paying jobs. Others are young people new to our country and vulnerable to this trade.
- Widows may not all be as economically destitute as in Jesus’ day. But many are lonely. Some, in their old age, sit alone at home or in nursing homes, neglected even by their children.
- And there are other “non-persons” in our society: undocumented workers who are easily exploited, prisoners and those recently released from prison, people with chronic illnesses and no one to care for them, just to give a few examples.
- Jesus reached out with compassion to the “non-persons” of his day. He invites us to do the same. We may not be able to solve the social problems of our society. But we can reach out to someone in need.
- And that small effort can be life giving to someone, as surely as Jesus gave new life to those widows whose sons were brought back to life.