

James Walks Home from Nain

—Luke 7:11-17

A pleasant place, he thinks as they descend the steep hill where sparrows dance, making their way among the tombs that line their narrow path. He imagines the lives and dreams of the inhabitants of these stone rooms. The way their voices have flown like leaves, the way they abide like trees.

Song-bright peak of Mt. Hermon white in the distance like some memory of laughter and the green plains an ocean all around and the children of the city playing their invisible flutes, mourning their invisible lost, dancing an imaginary grief and humming their mirth, he marvels that anyone could ever believe in death.

He looks for the light in the footprints of his master, perceives a glow where the worn sandals touched dirt. The way Jesus opens himself to the world, the way he smiles with his arms, embraces all faces of the sky. The bees around him echo the buzz of exuberance filling his soul, sensing a hidden sweetness everywhere.

Looking at a blue so vast so eternal so real, he wonders why some clouds are flat along the bottom, imagines them sitting atop some invisible eternal table where God dines on songs and hope, surrounded by the joyful transformed. Then he thinks of that poor widow and her son sitting down to their supper together tonight, wondering what to say.

What will soup taste like on a tongue returned from the darkest night? How will his laughter fill all the empty spaces in his mother's heart, dancing the light in her eyes, singing its weight and spiraling toward fullness? The son closes his eyes to offer a blessing over their meal but she cannot take hers off his ordinary, miraculous face.

—Robbie Taggart

This poem won third place in the 2025 BYU Studies Poetry Contest.