

# THE 16<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

October 1 2017

1 Kings 17:17-24  
Ephesians 3:13-21  
Luke 7:11-17

## ***Standing...***

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Twenty-four weeks ago today—it was Easter Sunday.

And we celebrated Christ's victory over death.

Lest we forget about Christ's power over death,

the Holy Spirit holds it before our eyes again in our Gospel lesson.

Let us pray. Father in heaven, You have promised that Your Holy Word, which goes forth from Your mouth, will not return to You empty, but it will accomplish what You desire, and it will succeed in the matter for which You sent it. May Your Word have its way in every heart, we pray this day. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, Amen.

## ***Sitting***

In two very short accounts, one from the Old Testament and the other from the New,  
we move from utter depression and bitter pain—  
to miraculous joy.

From the Old Testament, tears flood a woman's eyes.

Her son has died.

And we understand her tears.

Our world is full of pain.

It's steeped in sorrow.

Moreover, it's terribly, terribly unfair—

so much so that in times of tragedy we ask,

"Where is God in such horrendous suffering?"

Sure, we like it when God gives life to the dead—

But when He gives death to the living...

That jars us.

As a matter of fact, when the woman comes to Elijah regarding her son, even Elijah asks:  
*"O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow...  
 by killing her son?"* (1 Ki 17:20)

Yet Elijah takes the child away from view,  
 extends himself over the boy, and prays,  
*"O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again."* (1 Ki 17:21)

Elijah prays this three times—  
*"And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah."* (17:22)

The child revives, and Elijah delivers the boy back into his mother's arms, saying,  
*"See, your son lives."* (17:23)

Now look,  
 our lessons this morning aren't meant to address  
 all the questions we have about tragedy.

In fact, if you've suffered such tragedy, as I know many of you have,  
 this lesson may even make you feel worse.  
 But there's something grand here...  
 Something to see with the eyes of faith.

Jesus is being followed by a massive crowd.  
 Our Lord is quite popular at this point.

One crowd moves like a camp meeting lead by Jesus.  
 Only to be met by another crowd—  
 Led by a weeping mother and a coffin—it's a funeral procession.

At the head of this crowd is the Lord of Life.  
 At the head of this crowd is a victim of death, and all that comes with it—  
 hopelessness, despair, unfairness...

I mean, when the only son of a widowed mother dies...  
 this is tragedy squared.  
 He was all she had left, her only love, her only source of support.

When a funeral procession approaches us—  
 we pull over and let it go by.

Not Jesus.  
 He stands in the middle of the road,  
 like He's on the shore of Texas as Hurricane Harvey approaches.  
 Jesus stops the funeral procession in its tracks.

Now, I ask you, this son—  
 this "only begotten son" leading the funeral procession out of Nain...  
 What did he die from?  
 Was it cancer?  
 Heart failure?  
 Eating too much red meat?  
 No. He died from sin. Romans 6:23 says, "*the wages of sin is death.*"  
 So, whether this young man committed big sins or small sins—  
 it doesn't matter, for a single sin before the Majestic God  
 is all it takes.

Death was not God's intention or desire for Mankind—not at all.  
 God made us to live, not to die.  
 Death is what God warned Adam and Eve about in the Garden of Eden,  
 saying to the First Man, "*In the day you eat of it, you shall surely die.*"  
 And that's exactly what happened—he died.

This is why the genealogy in Genesis chapter 5, reads—  
*The days of Adam after he fathered Seth were 800 years; and he had other sons and daughters. Thus all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, (and here's what is to be noticed) and he died.*

With the exception of Enoch,  
 it's how the text reads for everyone in the chapter... "*and he died.*"

So, from the Garden of Eden all the way to the present—  
 It's like one big funeral procession,  
 marching across time and the earth.  
 And we've all joined it.  
 We all have mourned the death of friends and family.  
 And, one day, it will be our turn—  
 Our turn to be at the head of the line,  
 carried by six men,  
 brought to our final resting place.

The son being carried out of the gates of Nain is dead because of his sin.

There's no other reason.

For you see, if he had never sinned, he never would have died.

The same is true for you.

But what about the Man on the cross?

What does He die from?

Great wounds?

Blood loss?

Suffocation?

No. He dies from sin too, but not His own sin.

He has none.

He dies for your sin.

He was made sin for you.

So, everything you've ever been ashamed of...

Everything you've ever been guilty of...

Everything that's haunted you to this very day...

Everything that causes you to fear God and His judgment...

All of it...is nailed to His cross.

He has taken it all from you.

Which means it's not your sin anymore, but His.

And in its place He has given you His righteousness.

These two groups come face to face—

And when Jesus sees the widow, He has compassion. (Lk 7:13)

Mercy pours out of Him, to which He says to her, "*Do not weep.*" (7:13)

Now, coming from you or me, saying "Do not weep" wouldn't help her at all, but coming from Jesus... It's like He says, "I'm going to do something for you won't believe." "Do not weep, because I am here, and I am the resurrection and the life."

How can Jesus say this? Because to Him, death is nothing more than a peaceful sleep, and with a Word He can wake the dead.

Beloved, we must get into the habit of letting Jesus interpret reality rather than relying on our blind reason.

We see death.

Jesus sees sleep.

Who will you trust?

So having stopped the funeral procession, and spoken to the mother,  
 Jesus then touches the coffin.

In the Hebrew culture you do not touch death.

It's why the priest and the Levite do not touch the man left half-dead in the  
 Parable of the Good Samaritan.

To do so made one ceremonially unclean.  
 But Jesus does not worry Himself about that.  
 Uncleaness does not affect Him—  
 which is why He can touch lepers,  
 and not contract their contagion.

And what we have at this moment—

is the Widow's Son (*left*) encountering the Virgin's Son (*right*).  
 And in encountering the Virgin's Son,  
 Death will go home empty-handed.  
 Jesus says, "*Young man, I say to you, arise!*" (7:14)

Jesus speaks to a life-less body.

Someone who has ears, but cannot hear.  
 Eyes, but cannot see.

But what is death to Jesus?  
 An enemy—yes.  
 An intruder to God's creation—yes.  
 However, to Him it's as easy as waking someone up  
 from an afternoon nap.

And just like the wind,  
 and the waves,  
 and the demons,  
 and the diseases,  
 Death obeys His Word.

There's no hocus-pocus.  
 No grand ritual.  
 No strain or effort on Jesus' part.  
 Just the Almighty Word of God...

the same word that brought the universe into  
 existence, and called the stars into being.

The dead man then does what the dead cannot do, he sits up and begins to speak.  
 Funeral's over. Call off the grave side ceremony—  
 Tell the LWML there's no need for the funeral luncheon.

And just as Elijah gave the woman's son back into her arms, miraculously alive;  
 Jesus gives this son back to his mother, as a gift.

Now look, you and I haven't any reason to expect that we will be spared from the grave.  
 Sure, Christ will return, and those living at the time will escape death.  
 But Death is coming for us like a freight train—  
 a freight train we cannot stop.

But know this, Jesus has spoken to you,  
 doing so through His appointed ambassadors—your pastors.

Saying in John 5,  
*"...he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."*

This is the voice of the Gospel,  
 calling out to sinners to believe in the Lord Jesus,  
 the One who suffered death and the punishment for sin in your place,  
 who rose again from the dead  
 and gives eternal life to all who believe in His name.

The preaching of the Gospel is how Jesus comes to you and says, "Do not weep."  
 Why? Because there's nothing wrong? No. Because He has borne your wrongs and  
 borne your punishment and borne your death, and will make everything right between  
 you and God when you believe in Him.

What harm can death do to you,  
 if you have already passed from death into life?  
 What sin can condemn you,  
 if God has already made you alive together with Christ?

Our Lord Jesus has touched the coffin of all who believe in Him and has interrupted the  
 course of death through Holy Baptism.

So you see, what takes place in Nain foreshadows what is to come.

When we die,  
     our bodies will go into the earth and our souls go to our Father in heaven.

Eventually however, that grave will be undone.

*"The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."*

Mark my words...read my lips...I'll do sign language if I have to.

    The Nain cemetery will be undone.

    All cemeteries will be undone.

        They will all give up the dead.

Those who heard His voice calling in the Gospel during their earthly life,  
     who repented and believed in Him and persevered in faith until death,  
     will be raised to everlasting life.

        And those who failed to repent and believe

        will be raised to everlasting condemnation.

What our Lord says to this young man, on the Last Day He will say to you,

    "Arise, wake up O sleeper—to glory, to life."

    Then, Your body and soul will be reunited and you will rise.

    With sin totally removed—

        you will come forth perfected, in glory and in power.

And looking back over your shoulder you will say,

    "O grave, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"

Then, at last, all the widows will stop weeping—

    and the funeral procession that started back in the Garden of Eden,  
     will cease forever.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

### ***Standing...***

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.