

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.”

When you listen to these accounts of resurrection in the Old Testament and Gospel readings today, God is promising you something. The Lord promises you that you will rise from the dead. Really this is the surest and most certain thing. But is this how you view death and the promise of the resurrection as you go through this life?

Sin, the fallen world, and the devil tempt you. They want to rob you of this certainty. Think about that and what you experience as you go about your life. You see death around you, and you think about your own death. Right now, you might be thinking about all the funerals you have been attended. None of them ended the way this one does in this Gospel reading. You have seen spouses weep, children weep, parents weep, and you have wept. But where was the resurrection? Where was the funeral procession stopped, and the dead one sitting up and go back to his loved one?

And that’s where you are tempted. You are tempted to see death through the lens of your fallen reason, and what the world would tell you about death. So, what’s the answer? Listen to the world and the answer comes in therapeutic sentiment. You are told to move on try to find some way of answering the sting of death. You are offered the salve of trying to side step death. “Your loved one will live on your memories”, you are told. “He or she really isn’t far but in your heart.” Death becomes something put out of sight and out of mind. It tries to take the teeth out of the bite of death only to gum you to death.

The more callous will try to answer the question of death with what they think is a shock into “reality” or at least their version of it. Death is the end to this way of thinking. The sooner one buys into this then the sooner a person can make the most of whatever life he may have now for “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.”

And then there’s the devil. The old liar likes to take the sting of death and package it up with a false piety if the voices around you haven’t persuaded you. He likes to offer the notion of life after death but one that is void of Christ. The devil likes to preach an all-inclusive answer to death that sees all paths, beliefs, and ways leading to some notion of life where no matter what someone believes, he or she goes to be in a better place and can play golf with his buddies for all eternity. The devil also likes to spiritualize death as well to think our bodies are simply something to be discarded and not important. He wants us to see death and eternal life apart from the body and the bodily resurrection. This is another one of his oldest tactics and tricks.

So, what, then? God calls you to listen to him through his word. He calls you to see your sin and how the wages of sin is death. The Lord calls you to see death for what he tells you it is and call it like the Lord sees it. Death is terrible and entered into God’s creation only after the fall into sin. Sin brings about death. God calls to you see your own sin and repent. He calls to you see death through his word and the seriousness of it all.

And, you know, here’s the thing in this too. When you see death as God teaches you about it you see there is not only a real answer to death but there’s nothing surer and more certain than the promise you have amid death. The only answer to death is the life and death of Jesus because his death atones for sin. Only his perfect obedient life could offer up to God the sacrifice required to reconcile you to God and pay for your sin. Only God in the flesh could die the death for you and in your place. And by his resurrection you know that peace has been made and you stand forgiven and have life even as you face death.

“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.”

Seeing Jesus do what he does in the Gospel reading then is not surprising as the Lord stops death in its tracks and by merely speaking a word, “rise” he raises this widow’s son from the dead. Jesus is the Lord of life. He is the one who creates life, sustains life, and gives eternal life. And all that is what you have in your Lord Jesus. Jesus is risen from the dead, and your Lord proclaims this to you now. You have that here and now.

The fact that Jesus raises this man from the dead just by speaking his word is miraculous. This isn’t the only time he does it, either. Think about Lazarus, for example, when Jesus stands outside his tomb in John 11 and says, “Lazarus, come out.” In these two examples alone, Jesus is just simply doing what God does, God speaks and his word accomplishes the purposes for which he sends it. The thing about this here in the reading today is that Jesus speaks these words that raise this man from the dead even as Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, that’s your Lord who raised this man from the dead in the Gospel reading and your Lord is the same God who has called you his own in Holy Baptism. Jesus knows what death is, he doesn’t sugar coat it. Even as he saw this woman weeping over her son and said, “do not weep” Jesus himself would weep in John 11 over the death of his friend, Lazarus. But you see this were not tears of despair but tears of compassion, tears of mercy. Jesus knew the cost. The Father knows the cost and what it is to have his only begotten Son dead on the cross and laid into a tomb. Jesus knew the price that must be paid and he paid it freely and fully in his blood. He knew the suffering, the agony, and ugliness that is sin and death, yet he endured for your sake.

As Christians, see death in view of Jesus who is the resurrection and the life. View it as one who sees an enemy to be sure before you but one who already knows the outcome. This means as terrible as death is, you don’t fear death as a Christian. You don’t cower down in the face of it, let it rule your life, or paralyze you in anxiousness because you know death for what it really is and who has really overcome it. Facing the death of your loved ones who are in Christ is to face a terrible thing on this side of the grave and one where there is great pain and weeping but it’s to face it as one who knows that even if death should take your child from you, it doesn’t have the last word. The final say even amid death is the word of Jesus today, “rise.”

Baptized into Christ you have this because you have been crucified with Jesus and raised to new life. Your life is hidden in Christ who has covered you with himself and his righteousness. Forgiveness, life, and salvation are what belong to you each and every day you have in this world and whenever that day comes when you breathe your last in the world, that same forgiveness, life, and salvation are yours. Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.”

And that’s the certainty you have today in all this as well. Jesus has redeemed you. Now when you face death you don’t try to soften the blow to deflect the sting. You don’t try to come up with your own platitude to give some measure of what you might perceive as comfort. You don’t try to answer death with lies. No, in all these things you have the Lord who “is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think” as the Epistle reading says. So now you look at death with the absolute certainty of knowing you will rise from the dead just as this man did in the Gospel reading to be sure but even more so because your Lord Jesus is risen from the dead.

The consolation God gives you today is life, eternal life. God speaks these words to you now. He says “your sin is forgiven.” He says, “you are baptized into Christ.” He says, “take and eat this is my body. Take and drink this is my blood.” And through these very means, your Lord is delivering to you forgiveness, life, and salvation and the promise of what you have in Jesus. Clinging to Christ through his promises in word and sacraments you have life, and you know for certain what is yours even as you face all that is uncertain and terrible from the devil, the fallen world, and your own fallen flesh. The Lord is the one who has called you by name and speaks to you his word which pierces through it all. You know what yours in this life is and what is yours even in death. You sing, “The Will of God is always Best” because you have the confidence of Christ crucified and risen for you. Each day you have this and know it as you repent of your sin and cling to Jesus who is your Redeemer.

16th Sunday after Trinity—September 20, 2026

And if that wasn't enough your Lord also teaches you something about what he does and gives you. Those who belong to Jesus are not separated even in death. The people of God, the church are one body. That means even those loved ones who died in Christ who now are not seen, they are still living and they are still in Christ and his body, the church. They are before the throne of God and there is only one church. You are on this side of the grave and the saints before you are on the other. But you are still one church. You still have the same Lord. You still have the same Lord who comes to you bodily in his Supper and so when you feast at this banquet, this is the banquet for the Lord's saints and they join with you. They do so not just in sentiment or memory but as they are in the nearer presence of the Lord and you are here receiving your Lord through his appointed means. The same Lord, however, is real and truly present. This is why you sing "with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven." This place, the church is the place of the living and the place where heaven and earth meet.

As you feast in this church today, you feast proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes and know that day is most surely coming. That day, when the Lord comes in glory, he will not simply stop a funeral procession but come on the clouds with the voice of an archangel and the sound of the trumpet of God. On that day, the word "rise" will raise you from your grave and no longer will there be any death only life. No more will there be mothers who weep over their dead children but life with one another as the Lord wipes away tears from all faces. No longer will there be saints on this side of the grave but all the saints, the communion of saints, will be with the Lord bodily risen from the grave before the Lamb on his throne.

Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.'" What beautiful words today. What a confidence you have in Christ and what he promises for you. Death has defeated. You have eternal life. You will rise from dead. This is most certainly true.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.