**Fear Seized Them All**

**Luke 7:11-17**

Trinity 16 – 10.02.2022

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

Jesus, with His disciples and a great crowd is entering the city of Nain. As they drew bear the gate, they met a widow heading out of the city With the widow is a considerable crowd of mourners. She is on her way to bury her only son. Jesus stops the party of mourners leaving the city, and we are told, having compassion on her, He says to her, “Do not weep!”

I cannot even imagine how that went over with the widow or the crowd. I know that today, many would be appalled at hearing these words of Jesus.

I do know how many folks today would have reacted. “Do not weep? Seriously? This is her only son! She has already lost her husband! No parent should have to bury their child. We are taking her out to the graveyard to bury ***her only son*** and your words to her are, ‘Do not weep?’”

Some people think pastors have the perfect words to say to somebody when they come to visit a family at the death of a loved one. I can say in all humility, and with sad honesty, sometimes the best thing I have to say is nothing. Quietly listen to the family, maybe cry with them, or simply put a hand on a shoulder – or even – if you are comfortable enough with them, embrace them in a hug.

Death is a time to grieve, mourn, and cry. The heart of a loved one has ceased beating. They can no longer hug us, smile at us, laugh with us, or sit at table with us. It hurts! It brings tears to our eyes!

In that state of mind, Jesus said to this grieving widow, “Do not weep.”

There is no way to stop crying! But that is not all that Jesus did. He came up, touched the bier and the bearers stood still. And then, with but a word, He changed the world of the widow, the young man, and ***ALL*** those gathered, “Young man I say to you, arise.” Immediately the dead man set up and began to speak.

Had you been there and witnessed this how would you have responded?

If you had been with Jesus coming into the city with His crowd, might your response have been different than if you had been a part of the crowd leaving the city with the widow?

The party coming out of the city with the widow are in serious grief. When we consider funerals, as you heard earlier, and as you know is often said – people believe that a parent should never have to bury a child. This widow's grief at the death of her son comes with no spouse to stand by her side because her husband is also dead. It is true that she has many friends and neighbors in Nain who are there with her, but none who share her flesh and blood?

Jesus is fresh off the healing of the centurion's servant only the day before. That servant had been near unto dying, but the centurion would not even let Jesus come to his house to heal him. His faith led him to declare to Jesus, “Just say the word and my servant will be healed.”

Today’s crowd in our text are following Him, astounded at His works. How many understand what is truly going on? Is He just a miracle worker running around, pleasing the masses?

No! Jesus is snatching life from the very jaws of death. Yesterday, the centurion's servant was near death, today the windows son is dead.

When I read this text, I cannot keep Luther's great Easter hymn out of my mind, especially one verse in particular. It is the second verse in *The Lutheran Hymnal* or the fourth verse in *Lutheran Service Book.*

The entire hymn is powerful, but this one verse truly exemplifies today’s text.

*It was a strange and dreadful strife*

*when life and death contended.*

*The victory remained with life,*

*the reign of death was ended.*

*Holy Scripture plainly saith*

*that death is swallowed up by death;*

*Its sting is lost forever. Alleluia!*

Of course, this hymn verse is a reflection of the battle waged upon the cross. It was there that Life, in the person of Jesus Christ, was contending with death. In the case of Jesus on the cross, death’s manifestation is found in sinfulness.

Do you understand who Jesus is? He is the Word of God made flesh! This is the One who created all life with but a word, who breathed His life into Adam, and from Adam's flesh formed Eve.

What can this Word of God do? Better yet what can’t this Word of God do?

This Word of life speaks! At that speaking, life comes into the young man. The young man sits up and speaks and Jesus gives him to his mother!

We always want to know.

Does God see our life?

Does God know the suffering that we endure?

Does God understand the pain, the sorrow, the grief that we bear in this life?

Who is this one who stands at the side of the bier and gives back the son to the mother?

This is the One long awaited, conceived in the flesh of the virgin, at the speaking of God’s promise by the angel, through power of the Holy Spirit.

This is He whose family thought He was crazy.

Who wept over Jerusalem.

He prophesied of His imminent suffering and death.

Do you know the pain of your sinfulness?

Maybe you are aware how your sinfulness has affected others around you – causing them some sort of pain.

Hopefully, you are aware of how your sinfulness has affected you? Do you know how it has caused pain in your life?

But do you know the death that is the wages of your sin?

Christ knows this pain! Christ knows the pain of your sin because He bore it in His own body on the cross.

It was in that strange and dreadful strife of the cross that He bore your pain. On the cross He carried your sorrows. By His stripes you are healed. He endured your death, suffering for your sinfulness, to bring you peace.

This One, the author and perfector of life comes into Nain. He, with a Word, gives life to the son whom He returns to his widowed mother.

At this point, fear seized them all – the crowds with the widow coming out of the city, and also those accompanying Jesus into the city.

Those paused at the city gates were astounded. They were terrified, for who can do what Jesus has done?

Who can, with a word, return life to breathless clay?

Only him who breathed life into it to begin with.

Fear seized them all?

Of course, it did! For only God can do this.

Did you hear what they said after Jesus spoke this dead man back into life? “God has visited His people!”

Life comes to those who contend with death on a daily basis. Life comes to those who walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Those who understand, those who grasp how great a miracle it is that life overcomes death, will be seized with fear.

Not only will they be seized with true fear – fear of God, but love will claim their hearts, giving them new life, and trust of God will be exhibited in all they do.

Today life and death are contending. Death walked in those church doors. You and I, filled with sinfulness and death walked in those doors.

Here we were met by the Lord of life, His entourage with Him –angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven.

He speaks, “I say to you, arise.” And with His word death is vanquished in sins forgiven.

With His word, we are fed His body to eat and His blood to drink.

With His word we are raised to life! By His word to us, we are returned – we are entrusted again to our mother, the church!

Great indeed is the miracle that takes place every time we gather and Christ speaks to us.

Christ has compassion upon us, He cares for us, and we are given life. Behold, the true fear of God seizes us. Let us declare as did those gathered at Nain, with those who gather with us this day – both seen and unseen – “God has visited His people!”

Indeed He has, and we are blessed in His visitation both now and forevermore.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.