

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter  
Service of Daily Prayer -- Morning  
May 9, 2021

P: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

P: O Lord, open my lips,

C: **and my mouth will declare Your praise.**

*Psalm 51:15*

P: Make haste, O God, to deliver me;

C: **Make haste to help me, O Lord.**

*Psalm 70:1*

P: Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;

C: **for His steadfast love endures forever!**

*Psalm 118:29*

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

### Scripture Readings

*2 Kings 4:18-37*

When the child had grown, he went out one day to his father among the reapers. And he said to his father, "Oh, my head, my head!" The father said to his servant, "Carry him to his mother." And when he had lifted him and brought him to his mother, the child sat on her lap till noon, and then he died. And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God and shut the door behind him and went out. Then she called to her husband and said, "Send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may quickly go to the man of God and come back again." And he said, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." She said, "All is well." Then she saddled the donkey, and she said to her servant, "Urge the animal on; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you." So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel.

When the man of God saw her coming, he said to Gehazi his servant, "Look, there is the Shunammite. Run at once to meet her and say to her, 'Is all well with you? Is all well with your husband? Is all well with the child?'" And she answered, "All is well." And when she came to the mountain to the man of God, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came to push her away. But the man of God said, "Leave her alone, for she is in bitter distress, and the Lord has hidden it from me and has not told me." Then she said, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'" He said to Gehazi, "Tie up your garment and take my staff in your hand and go. If you meet anyone, do not greet him, and if anyone greets you, do not reply. And lay my staff on the face of the child." Then the mother of the child said, "As the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her. Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the face of the child, but there was no sound or sign of life. Therefore he returned to meet him and told him, "The child has not awakened."

When Elisha came into the house, he saw the child lying dead on his bed. So he went in and shut the door behind the two of them and prayed to the Lord. Then he went up and lay on the child, putting his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands. And as he stretched himself upon him, the flesh of the child became warm. Then he got up again and walked once back and forth in the house, and went up and stretched himself upon him. The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. Then he summoned Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite." So he

called her. And when she came to him, he said, "Pick up your son." She came and fell at his feet, bowing to the ground. Then she picked up her son and went out.

1 John 5:1-8

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

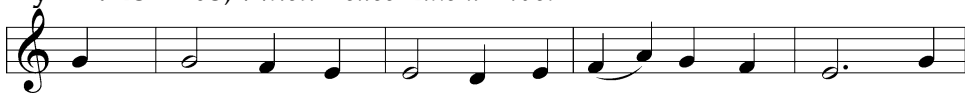
This is he who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.

John 15:9-17

[Jesus said:] As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

**Hymn:** LSB 763, *When Peace Like a River*



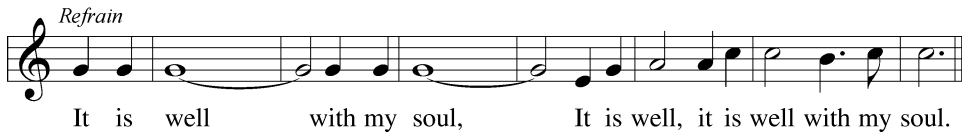
1 When peace, like a riv - er, at - tend - eth my way; When  
2 Though Sa - tan should buf - fet, though tri - als should come, Let  
3 He lives— oh, the bliss of this glo - ri - ous thought; My  
4 And, Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight, The



sor - rows, like sea bil - lows, roll; What - ev - er my lot, Thou hast  
this blest as - sur - ance con - trol, That Christ hath re - gard - ed my  
sin, not in part, but the whole, Is nailed to His cross, and I  
clouds be rolled back as a scroll, The trum - pet shall sound and the



taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul.  
help - less es - tate And hath shed His own blood for my soul.  
bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!  
Lord shall de - scend; E - ven so it is well with my soul.



## Sermon

"I never asked for this!" Have you ever thought something like that? It's a natural reaction at times, when you feel things are out of control. Perhaps especially when something good goes sour -- that's what the poor mother in today's Old Testament reading seems to feel. As a little background, this couple (wealthy but previously childless) had showed considerable kindness and hospitality to Elisha the prophet; because he was serving God, they took care of him. As an answer to her prayer and a response to this faith, God gave her this son. And this is the son (still a young boy or, at most, a teenager) who has just suddenly, tragically died.

She was faithful. God gave her the son she desired. And now, she has lost him. Maybe we can understand her pain as she speaks to Elisha; certainly we can see it here. "Did I ask for a son?" she says. No! She'd come to terms with being childless; she hadn't dared get her hopes up for having children. Even in faith, she didn't ask Elisha, even when he did many other miracles. He asks her what kind of reward she would choose: "You've gone to great trouble and great expense to show hospitality to me; you've truly gone above and beyond. What can I do for you?" he asks her. And she responds, in essence, "Don't worry about it. I'm content with my life."

She doesn't ask at all. She's content, and what a wonderful blessing that is, to be content with your life! Even when Elisha then goes on to say she'll have a son, her response is "Don't get my hopes up." And now, after all of that, when God's grace had given her what she wanted so dearly, now her boy is taken away so awfully? She feels it would have been better to never have had a son at all, rather than to have him then lose him.

You remember Job's attitude in his own loss, after all that happened to him: "The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" But while that is a faithful response, it's a terribly hard one. The Lord gives, we know that; we celebrate that and praise Him for it. The Lord gives, even when we do not deserve it. He gives us life, body and soul; He gives us all that we have; He gives us salvation and forgiveness. There is nothing good that is not a product of God's giving, whether earthly and physical things or eternal, spiritual things. In addition to her faith, in addition to God's Word through Elisha, this particular woman was also given an unexpected joy in her son.

But "the Lord gives, and the Lord takes away." Sometimes God takes away, and those are the hard-to-understand moments. Those are the moments where this mother asks "Why would you do this to me? Why would you give me my beloved son, without me even asking, only to snatch him away like this?" There are times when God takes away, and you can think of your own examples far better than I can. When you've lost a loved one in a tragic, unexpected way like this poor woman. If you've lost a job, if you've suffered in your health. Probably a hurricane or two with all the destruction and loss around them - no one who was here is going to forget Katrina any time soon.

How should we respond, when God takes away? Maybe we feel it's better to not blame God for it in the first place: it was just a natural disaster, it was just an accident, it's a sign of living in a broken, fallen world. We sidestep the question of "why?" After all, even Jesus says that bad things are going to happen in this life. He says, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." He reminds us that his power, his forgiveness, his gift of eternal life and spiritual righteousness is far beyond anything of this temporary world that is all going to come to an end anyway.

But we also have to remember that Scripture tells us to "mourn with those who mourn, weep with those who weep," and Ecclesiastes says "there is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance." Jesus wept when faced with his dead friend Lazarus and his mourning,

grief-stricken sisters. Sometimes there is no immediate relief for our suffering. Sometimes there is no instant answer. Sometimes we don't ever found out "why?" "I never asked for this. I wish none of this had ever happened."

But grief does not cancel out hope. This mother immediately rushes to find Elisha. He's the prophet, the man of God -- he's the one who started this, who promised me this son! If anyone can make this right, it's him, and God through him. Did she expect Elisha to raise the boy back to life? Or did she just want to vent to him, as if being able vent in God's face?

She does have hope. Twice, to her husband and then to Elisha's servant, she says "All is well." But it isn't! Or is it, for her? A few minutes ago, we sang "It is well with my soul," this image of that peace which surpasses all human understanding. Do you know the story of that hymn? It was written by a man named Horatio Spafford, an American who lived in the late 1800s. He's almost a Job-like figure. His early life sounded ideal: he was a successful lawyer, he became wealthy from some good real estate investments in Chicago, he was happily married with five children.

Then, in 1871, his four year old son died suddenly from scarlet fever. Just a few months later, the great Chicago Fire destroyed most of his property and investments, and ruined him financially. Two years after that, his wife and four daughters were sailing across the Atlantic to England when they were caught in a shipwreck. His wife Anna survived, while all four daughters did not. She sent him a telegram that simply said "Saved alone. What shall I do?"

And yet, even in the middle of this enormous tragedy, they both showed remarkable faith, supernatural faith that can only come from God. Anna said not long after the shipwreck, "God gave me four daughters. Now they have been taken from me. Someday I will understand why." And just a few days later, as Horatio sailed to join his wife, his own ship passed near the spot where the wreck had happened. It was then, on the ship, that he began writing this hymn, "It is well with my soul." When sorrows, like sea billows roll; whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say, it is well, it is well with my soul... Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blest assurance control... And Lord, haste the day when our faith shall be sight... Even so, it is well with my soul.

This is the faith of Job, confident in God even when things look at their worst. Even when his whole life is torn apart, and his grief beyond measure, God is still there and still reigns. This is the faith of this Shunammite woman, for whom all is well as she goes to seek God and God's Word to her. It is in the Word of God and in faith that we find this supernatural kind of peace in the face of tragedy. The God who brought life to her in the first place could just as easily restore it. God is in the business of resurrection; He's got a monopoly on it.

And this woman with her son point us to the truth of God and His own Son. He is the King of the universe, and He is the Lord of life. Just a couple of weeks ago, we heard Jesus' confident reminder to his disciples: "I have authority to lay down my life, and I have authority to take it back up again." He is in the business of bringing life, restoring life, preserving life; death has no power where God sends it away.

I know I sometimes quote ancient Christian writers to you, our forebearers in faith going back to the first couple of centuries of the Church. Hearing from people of other times and places can help us see blind spots in our own contemporary worldview and mindset; I think there's a lot we should learn from them, and one thing in particular that I love about how they read the Bible is how they see Christ in every detail. Several of them wrote about this passage, with Elisha and the resurrection of this boy, and they paid a lot of attention to Elisha's actions as the child was raised. When he adjusted himself and matched himself to the boy, they saw Jesus in that.

One of them wrote this: "Consider how much that man of full age drew himself together, so that he might fit the little child who lay dead; for what Elisha prefigured in the case of the boy, Christ fulfilled in the entire human race... Because we were little children, he made himself small [becoming one of us in the incarnation]; since we lay dead, the kind physician bent down." They saw this as a

kind of foreshadowing of Jesus, that as Elisha pulled himself in to match the dead boy, so Jesus humbled himself, he took on humanity and matched himself to us, so that he could bring us who were dead in sin to new life in the Spirit. As Jesus himself says, all the Scriptures point to him and testify to him, and in these good works of God throughout history we can see a foreshadowing or an echo or a trace of what we find fulfilled in Jesus, what we see made the most clear in him.

A lot of things may happen where we think "I never asked for this!" Indeed, we will have troubles and heartaches in this world. But Jesus has overcome the world. Jesus has overcome death. And so, we live with faith, proclaiming what God has done for us. And may the Holy Spirit who is with us and in us teach us every day to say "It is well with my soul."

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done on earth  
as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom  
and the power and the glory  
forever and ever. Amen.**

**C: Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

**P: O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

**C: Amen.**

**All: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

**P: Let us bless the Lord!**

**C: Thanks be to God!**

**P: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.**

**C: Amen.**