

Trinity XVI

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Preacher: Fr. Wade Miller

[0 : 00] In our gospel reading from Luke chapter 7 this morning, we heard the heart-wrenching story of a widow whose only son died.

This widow had already lost her main support and security, especially in the ancient day, through the death of her husband. And now she's left destitute because her only son is dead.

Jesus witnesses the body of the widow's son being removed from the house. And when our Lord saw this widow, this grieving mother, our text says that he was moved with compassion.

That compassion, that empathy, did not stop with our Lord simply feeling sorry for this poor woman and what she had endured.

We are told that this grieving widow and mother, that he says to her, do not weep.

[1 : 11] He then touched the coffin and suddenly the processional of mourners stopped. He then said to the dead son, young man, I say to you, arise.

And listen to what St. Luke records next. So he who was dead sat up and began to speak.

And he, that is Jesus, presented him to his mother. Now, if that doesn't give you chills, nothing will. It certainly moved the crowd because we go on to read, Then fear came upon all.

And they glorified God, saying, A great prophet has risen from among us, and God has visited his people. The people are absolutely dumbfounded by what they had just witnessed.

A young dead man has now been given the gift of life. He has come back from the dead. He has been restored from death.

[2 : 29] The people recognize that something extraordinary has happened. And they say, God has visited us, and he has sent us a prophet.

And the prophet that they are thinking of is Elijah. And we know this because two chapters later, in Luke chapter 9, Jesus asked his disciples, Who do the crowd say that I am?

And their response was, Elijah. Why? Why Elijah? Because we read about a similar miracle from this great Old Testament prophet.

Elijah prayed, and then he laid on a dead boy. And that's recorded in 1 Kings chapter 17. And this dead boy belonged to a widow that had showed great hospitality to Elijah.

And so Elijah acted on her behalf as she is mourning her son, her only son's death, in a way that is very similar to what we heard here in our gospel reading from Luke chapter 7 this morning.

[3 : 45] But, here's the difference. Elijah prayed, and then he stretched himself out on the dead boy three times before the son came back to life.

Jesus merely speaks. And the power and the authority of his word awakens this boy from death and imparts life.

You see, Jesus is not simply a prophet like Elijah. God has indeed visited his people.

He has visited his people as they rightly confessed. But this visitation was in the fact that God himself was standing in their midst in the person of Jesus the Christ.

Jesus. Fully man. And fully God. Not a mere spokesman or representative of the creator.

[4 : 53] Friends, these past 18 months or so have been very challenging. I've talked to all of you.

And whether it's not affected you personally, it's affected your family, your friends, your job. The whole COVID crisis, it's been much more than a life-threatening virus or a dangerous virus.

And sadly, it's become a political hot potato. But it's led to a rise in depression. And thoughts of suicide.

It has brought enormous challenges to an educational system already broken and in turmoil. It has affected many people in terms of their employment.

And it's affected employers being able to find people who will actually work. And I'm not here to talk about the politics of it. Like you, I'm tired of it.

[5 : 55] I really am. But the greatest challenge, the greatest challenge, I think for all of us, is not only hearing but knowing people that have been affected.

People that have become very sick. It's about contemplating death, which we don't like to think about. We don't like to talk about death.

And that's why I want to leave you with two lessons. Two lessons I think we learned from Luke chapter 7 here in our gospel text this morning. The first lesson is that be encouraged.

Be encouraged.

He's raised from the dead. Points ultimately to our hope. Because he points to the resurrection that would happen in the person of Jesus. And because our Lord conquered death, being raised again to new life, we too, as baptized Christians, are now raised with him to new life.

[7 : 30] We have been buried with Christ. We have been raised to new life. And our hope and our future is with him for eternity. Sorry, I went a little bad there on you.

And that reality will be made visible. It will become crystal clear.

When Christ, by the mere pronouncement of his word, raises all of those who have put their faith and trust in him and they come up out of the grave.

And such people will enjoy a new Eden. Such people will enjoy the presence of God where that new Eden will not be susceptible to any sickness or death.

Colossians chapter 3. Colossians chapter 3 verses 1 through 3 says this. If then you were raised with Christ.

[8 : 35] If you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above. Where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above. Not on the things of this earth.

For you died. Again, speaking of our baptism. For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, appears, then you will appear with him in glory.

That's our hope. That's why we're here. But this brings me to the next lesson.

Jesus not only demonstrated his power over death by raising this young lad from the grips of the grave. But he now demonstrates the very heart of compassion and concern for others.

Throughout the old covenant, the people of God are called to be a compassionate people. As a matter of fact, taking care of the fatherless and the widow are explicitly commanded.

[9 : 44] In the book of Deuteronomy alone, chapters 14, 24, and 26, all speak of this command. To take care of the widow and the fatherless.

And for those in need. Jesus demonstrates not only his power over death. He demonstrates true love. He demonstrates compassion.

And he does it as he cares for those who need help. He cared for this widow. And he cared for her son.

Jesus represents the goal of the law. The purpose. The telos of the law. How?

And caring for his neighbor. As Mary, the mother of our Lord, says in the Magnificat. He has exalted the humble and the meek.

[10 : 46] You see, Jesus was not concerned about self-care. He was not concerned about himself. He was not driven by what he wanted.

Or what he thought he needed. Or the time he needed away. He consumed himself with others.

And the care and compassion of others.

He stepped out of his comfort zone. To extend mercy to others. And he made the kingdom of God known. Not only in what he taught.

But by the power that he had. In healing those diseased and sick. And raising up the dead.

Likewise, dear friends.

That's our purpose as well. We are called to care for others. We are to rejoice in the fact that death has been swallowed up forever.

[11 : 48] Once and for all in the victory of our Lord. And in his resurrection. We are to rejoice in the joy of this resurrection. That hope.

And that compassion. To a world that is all about gloom and doom. You know what I'm talking about. Every time you turn on the news.

It markets doom. We are to speak the words of life. We are to live in the joy of this resurrection.

And we are to do so without fear. As baptized Christians. We are to live in the joy and the hope of life and resurrection.

Even while we live in a culture that promotes selfishness and death. I mentioned before.

[12 : 46] Colossians chapter 3. Let me close now by reading the end of Colossians chapter 3. Here in verses 12 through 17. Which captures the heart of what we are called to be as Christians. St. Paul writes. Therefore put on tender mercies. Kindness. Humility. Meekness. Long suffering. Bearing with one another. Forgiving one another. Even as Christ forgave you. But above all these things. Put on love.

Which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. To which you were also called in one body.

And be thankful. Let the word of Christ. Dwell in you richly with all wisdom. You know that word that said young man arise.

[13 : 47] That word has come flesh. That word now dwells with us. Let that word dwell in you. Richly. In all wisdom.

Teaching. And admonishing one another. In psalms and hymns. And spiritual songs. Singing with grace. Grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed.

Whatever you say. Or whatever you physically do. Do all. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Giving thanks to God the Father Almighty. Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the Son. And of the Holy Ghost. Amen.