

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity Sunday
St. Luke 7:11-17
October 1st, 2017
Sts. Peter and Paul Ev. Lutheran Church
Greenville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Do Not Weep

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

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

Today we meet two crowds in the city of Nain. One is a joyful crowd following the Lord + Jesus Christ. The other is a somber crowd carrying the only son of a widow who lies dead in a casket. Picture the scene: a joyful crowd encounters a somber crowd. The joy is sucked out of the one crowd because they see the pain and heartbreak of the other crowd, and as it is with us, lose their joy and feel the sorrow of the other crowd. The somber crowd, on the other hand, loses some of their sorrow upon seeing the Lord + Jesus. But, their sorrow is not completely lost, for they cannot expect the Lord to restore to life the one they carry.

We certainly know that the Lord + Jesus is the Lord of life and has power over death and the grave, but in the Lord's earthly ministry He only raised three people (besides Himself) from death: Jairus' daughter, Lazarus, and the young man in today's Gospel. In other words, our Lord + Jesus did not go around raising everybody, but only a few select few to show His power over death. Therefore, this crowd who is carrying the dead son of the widow of Nain could not expect what was about to happen. But, they certainly knew that the Lord was a great prophet in their midst and had worked great miracles for others in the past.

The city of Nain is only about four miles from Capernaum, the city where our Lord made His home, and did most of His miracles. So, the people of Nain would have certainly heard of the great things our Lord had done, and probably, had seen Him perform some of the miracles themselves. And so, when a joyful crowd meets a somber crowd both multitudes are stopped in their tracks so that the Evangelist St. Luke could record for our ears the good things that our Lord does on this day.

From this point, all attention is given to our Lord + Jesus and the widow of Nain. A few things need to be noted about this widow. First, that she is doubly cursed. We see that she has lost her son—her only son—to death. She has lost her only means of support. Women in the Jewish culture relied on the men to provide for them. Just as it was for Ruth and Naomi from the Book of Ruth. Their only means of providing food for themselves was to glean from the fields what the harvesters had left for them. And so, this woman had lost her final and only means of support. She had already lost her husband. Her husband is not mentioned in the text, but through the classification of the woman from Nain as a widow. Therefore, she is doubly-cursed. She had lost her husband. And now she has lost her only son.

Such is the wages of sin in this life. This is the reward which we receive on account of our sin: we receive death. This was the promised curse before Adam and Eve ever sinned. Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, otherwise you will die. Adam and Eve did not die physically the day they ate it, but they did die spiritually. Therefore, Adam and Eve experienced two kinds of death. Spiritual death and physical death. But, there is a third type of death that awaits all those who do not repent and believe on the Lord + Jesus Christ for their salvation, that is, the eternal death in Hell.

So then, there are three kinds of death that a person can die: there is spiritual death, in which we are all born, until we are made alive by the Holy Ghost through the waters of Holy Baptism. There is physical death, which we will all suffer, unless our Lord + Jesus returns before that day. And, eternal death, which all impenitent unbelievers suffer in Hell as a punishment for their rejection of the One, True Lord of life—the Lord + Jesus Christ.

The widow of Nain has experience the physical death of both her husband and only son. This would be a great burden for anyone. Perhaps she had other relatives, we are not told. But even so, the feeling of utter defeat and loneliness must have certainly touched this woman. Even as we would feel the heartbreak if we had lost our closest loved ones. The crowd accompanying her to the grave of her only child also felt her pain. They saw a physical example of the what the wages of sin are: death. This was the result of the inbred sin in them. This is the punishment that awaits us all. Death at this point seems to have gained the upper hand. Death seems to have won the victory over our lives. And that is the way we feel when someone close to us dies. We feel defeated by death.

We feel defeated until the Lord + Jesus Christ is preached into our ears. The same is true for this somber crowd. Who do they meet on the way to the grave? The Lord + Jesus, Who is also accompanied by a large crowd. It is almost as if the Lord + Jesus purposely walked this way; as if He knew where He was going, so that He could meet this widow of Nain. For, upon seeing the somber crowds, the dead young man, and the widow, we are told by St. Luke that our Lord had compassion for her. The word for compassion in the Greek implies a suffering of one's heart for the person upon who the compassion is directed. In other words, our Lord ached in His heart for this woman.

This is not how He desired His most beloved creation to exist. He did not desire that we live with sin and death. When He created us, He did not desire that we live in pain and with fear of death. This is why He comes in our flesh. This is why He leaves His home in Heaven and becomes incarnate in our flesh, because we would never be able to rescue ourselves from the powers of sin, death and the devil. The Lord must come and defeat our enemies. He must fulfill the Law and pay for the sin of mankind. He must suffer and die in our flesh, so that He might rise again on the third day and show that He is indeed the Lord of life and has conquered sin and death, and has put the devil in eternal place in Hell once and for all.

For this widow of Nain, He shows a glimpse of this power over death. For, He goes to the casket and says, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" And the young man sat up alive. Not only did he sit up alive, but he began to speak. In other words, he was able to think and feel, and form words and sentences. He was fully alive.

When our Lord told the widow of Nain to not weep. There was comfort in those words. For, just like when we say that to someone, it implied His compassion for her. It implied that He felt her pain and if He could do anything about it He would take away her sad heart and give her a heart of joy. When we say "do not weep" to someone, we surely wish to take away that person's pain, but the means escape us, especially when we are talking to someone who has lost someone to death. We cannot restore their loved one to life again, but we would if we could. However, our Lord + Jesus Christ has that power, and He does what He can do to take away this woman's pain and sorrow. He restores her young son to her alive.

Our Lord has done the same for us. We may not see a resurrection from physical death for our loved ones. But, we do see a resurrection from spiritual death for our loved ones. Whenever we baptize our loved ones—whenever we bring someone to this font—we are raising them from the spiritual death in which they were born and in which they remain until faith is enkindled in their heart through the work of the Holy Ghost through the means of grace. We bring physically alive people, who are inwardly spiritually dead to this font so that the Lord of life might say to them, “Young man, I say to you, arise.”

We also eat this meal that our Lord gave to us—a meal of His very Body and Blood in bread and wine—to sustain us until we go to our eternal home in Heaven. There we will be given new glorified bodies on the Last Day. On account of the faith created in us by the Holy Ghost, and sustained by this meal we will be rescued from the third death—the eternal death in Hell—and be given an eternal home in Heaven.

This young man’s resurrection is a foreshadowing of our Lord’s resurrection on the third day. The day which we celebrate today and every Sunday, because every Sunday is a reflection of Easter Sunday. Every Sunday is a reflection of the resurrection of our Lord + Jesus Christ. And therefore, every Sunday is a reflection of our own resurrection. Today is the day we celebrate our life in Christ. We are no longer dead. We are no longer spiritually dead, but we are alive in Christ + Jesus. When we remain in this faith and remain spiritually alive, we receive the reward of Heaven and rescue from the eternal death in Hell. And on the Last Day our current bodies will be replaced with glorified bodies, and we will live for all eternity with our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ.

There in Heaven we will join with the rest of the crowd of all those who believe on the Lord + Jesus Christ and this multitude will proclaim the praises of our Lord for all eternity. Singing for all eternity, “God had visited His people” and “A great prophet has risen among us.” For the Lamb of God Who was slain for the sins of the whole world has destroyed death and the grave, and given to all those who believe on Him eternal life in Heaven.

Therefore, let us join our voices with this heavenly multitude and sing the praises of our Lord, Who has purchased and redeemed us from sin, death and the devil, and has placed us into the crowd of saints through Holy Baptism, and feeds us and the whole multitude of the saints on Earth with His very Body and Blood in bread and wine to sustain us until life everlasting. Do not weep, for the Lord of life holds your life in His hands, and He will give you the eternal crown of life in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.