

*And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak.*

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Last year, a charismatic church prayed for a week that a little girl would be raised from the dead. The toddler had died suddenly, and the church called for global prayer, believing that if Jesus had raised the dead in those great Bible stories like we heard this morning then, surely, He can do the same today. For an entire week the church held services night and day, they sang and prayed, they believed that God could raise the little girl to back to life. Yet, as the media was quick to point out, after a week of fervent prayer, the little girl did not rise from the dead. Now we may hear several comments on a story like this, such as, *well if they had prayed hard enough, or had more faith, maybe God would have raised up that little girl.* Or we may hear it said, *well, God does not do these type of miracles anymore.* But what should the Christian say? The Christian should confess and believe that which the Church has always taught, that the Lord will return and the dead, even that little girl, will be raised from the dead, to die no more.

This is one of my biggest pet peeves at funerals today. Of all the Evangelical Protestant churches I have attended funerals in, mention of the Resurrection of the dead has been few and far between. Recent funeral sermons have included but have not been limited to the pastor's last fishing trip, generic motivational talks, or worse, a terrible understanding of angels. Or even worse, that the Resurrection of the dead will only be spiritual and not literal. The grieving family needed assurance of Jesus' love and mercy, they needed assurance of everlasting, that death is not the end. We need to be reminded in our grief and in the face of death that the Resurrection and Life Everlasting is the promise of Jesus Christ and the Christian's hope.

These past few weeks we have been taught in the lessons at Mass to trust fully in God. We have been reminded that we must rely always on God's grace. Jesus says, *be not anxious for tomorrow, or what you shall wear, or eat, for your heavenly father knows what you have need of.* God spent forty years teaching the Israelites this important lesson in the wilderness. God had proven Himself to be a great general through the great plagues that were visited on Egypt, through the Israelite's escape from Egypt, and by defeating Pharaoh's famous chariots. God had performed all these signs and wonders and still they ask if God can give them food and water. So, God rained down manna and quail for them daily but only enough for the day, and He made water to spring out of the stone which followed them through the wilderness. He led them through the desert with a pillar of cloud and

fire. He made it so that their sandals never wore out and still they did not fully trust in Him.

In today's Gospel the Israelites are shown that not only can God provide for our needs, not only does He feed us and clothe us, but He shows us He has the power over life and death. Jesus has said *be not anxious for your life, have no fear*. This takes on new meaning this morning. He shows us this morning that we should not be anxious about anything, not even about death. But this should not be new to us. We heard this morning how the prophet Elijah prayed to God and a little boy was raised from the dead. God also raised a man from the dead through Elijah's protégé Elisha. As they lowered the man into Elisha's grave he touched the prophet's bones and he was restored to life. It should be no surprise then that Jesus Christ raises the dead too.

In three different instances, Jesus brings the dead to life by speaking directly to the individual. The dead are not beyond hearing the voice of Christ! We heard the first of these accounts this morning with the raising of the widow's son whom Jesus raises to life during his funeral procession. The boy had only been dead for a few hours by this time. Jesus touches the stretcher they had placed him on, and speaks directly to him, *young man arise*. A second time Jesus raises the daughter of Jairus who had been dead for only a few minutes. Our Lord takes her hand and says, *maid arise*. A third time, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead who had been dead for a few days. Jesus calls to Lazarus from the other side of his grave, *Lazarus come forth*. Jesus says, *I am the Resurrection and the Life*, and He proves this by raising those who had been dead from a few minutes, a few hours, and even a few days. Death is no obstacle for Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself was a widow's Son and, perhaps, this is why He has compassion on the widow of Nain. But note that the widow of Nain's son, like Jairus's daughter and Lazarus, was restored to his body of mere flesh and blood, subject to all the laws of nature. Yet, we do well to remember that when Jesus is raised from the dead, He is resurrected. His body is glorified flesh and blood, no longer subject to the laws of nature and no longer subject to death.

This morning we are confronted with the power of God even over death. It is one thing to work miracles and to heal, to provide for our every need, but it is quite another thing to raise the dead. We are reminded that God's grace, His compassion and mercy can follow us through death and bring us into Everlasting Life. Jesus' death has transformed life for the Christian. This is what we confess every Sunday in the Creed, *I believe in the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come*. This is not unfounded hope, for we have Jesus promise that

again the dead will hear the voice of Christ, *for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* All shall be raised from the dead to stand before God, the saint and the sinner, the Good Samaritan and the robber, the publican and the Pharisee, the aged and the suicide.

So how do we apply this to our lives? Jesus has power over life and death, He has promised that all will be raised from the dead and we know that all will stand before Him at the last day for judgment. Let us live as children of God who are destined to life and life everlasting. Let us live in hope, and not in fear. And let us remember that Jesus is the only one with power over life and death, He is the only one worthy to judge, and He is love and mercy. Yet one question remains, will we begin this day to allow Jesus to raise us up from another kind of death? Will we allow Jesus to raise us from the death of sin? Sin is death to God, and we are sinners. Will we allow Jesus to raise us up from our sins and into the life of His righteousness? As Christians we can be raised from the dead and to life everlasting beginning this very morning. Amen.