

**In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth; for His word is truth. Amen**

**Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity (2021)**

**The Creator Comes to Re-Create Fallen Man**

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***“Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.” (Luke 7:14–15, ESV)***

Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem, to the executioner, to His ultimate destination where He will willingly give His life on the Altar of the Cross for the forgiveness of sin for all men when He encounters a funeral procession in the city of Nain. Here impending death encounters death. But just as death could not hold Him in the grave, the Prince of Life breaks the chains of death in this encounter and grants life to the dead. He who is to be resurrected, grants a resurrection to the son of the widow in the city of Nain.

We all know that death is the final act of life, but for most, death is a horrifying and alien part of life. Many, when they encounter death, get angry at God. Why, God, did you take our loved one away from us? Why, God, did you bring this tragedy into my life? Do you have something against me? Are you punishing me for something? This is a question many ask God when death visits their door. It is the question the widow of Zarephath asks Elijah when her son died: ***“What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!” (1 Kings 17:18, ESV)*** In her grief she believes that Elijah had been sent by God to be the instrument through which God would punish her for her sins, taking her son from her. But nothing could be further from the truth. Death is this alien force that came into the world through the sin of Adam. St. Paul tells us, ***“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin . . . death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12, ESV)***

Death came into the world through one person, Adam. But this is not the way God created the world. God created a world that was ***“very good”*** (Gen. 1:31) There was no sin, there was no death. But one man, Adam, disrupted this ***“very good”*** existence, and by his sinful act, death came into the world and spread to all men. David affirms this, saying, ***“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5, ESV)*** Sin follows sin and the Word of God makes it clear; death is the consequence of sin.

But we are not to assume that all people are condemned solely because of Adam’s sin, or that we all sinned in Adam. No, St. Paul does not say that all people sinned because Adam sinned, but that *all* die because *all* have sinned. Our human nature, corrupted at birth, kills immortality in man, making man mortal. We all die. But death does not have to be the end of our existence. It does not have to be an eternal death. To the contrary, death leads to eternal life for all who believe in the salvific work of Jesus on the Altar of the Cross, for all who believe that Our Lord’s death opened God’s heart to forgive the sins of all who believe and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of the world. St. Paul again brings us great comfort reminding us that, ***“by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19, ESV)*** The death of Christ, His obedience, is reckoned to us as righteousness. God reveals this truth in the Gospel, and it is acquired by the believer through faith. Now, in the city of Nain, sin’s penalty is encountered by our Lord Jesus.

The scene of a mother grieving for her lost son stimulates compassion on those in the funeral procession. This woman's only son had died. But it was more than just a son who had died. This woman was a widow and her son, her only son, was her only support and provider. Moreover, this was not her first taste of death's sorrow. She had experienced this before with the death of her husband. Now her son had died and without him her future looked very bleak. Who would support her? This is not a trivial question.

The importance of financial support for godly widow's is spoken of by St. Paul in his first letter to St. Timothy. Therein he writes, ***"If a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God."*** (1 Timothy 5:4, ESV) Family members were first and foremost the ones obligated to provide for the needs of a widow before asking the church for support. Therefore, the circle of responsibility begins with the family. When widows do not have family members to come to their assistance, then it is the church's responsibility to be her support and provider. So, we are comforted knowing that ***"a considerable crowd from the town was with her."*** (Luke 7:12, ESV) This crowd consisted not only of sympathizers, but also those who were members of the church who knew that the Lord had said that the ***"Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation."*** (Psalm 68:5, ESV) But more than knowing, they realize the support and provision for this widow was now their responsibility.

Coming upon the funeral procession, Jesus sees the widow and St. Luke tells us, He had compassion on her and said to her, ***"Do not weep."*** (Luke 7:13, ESV) Our Lord Jesus was filled with *tender mercy* towards this woman. This is the same tender mercy we proclaim in the words of the Benedictus during Matins and Morning Prayer as we sing, *"through the tender mercy of our God; when the day shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."* Our Lord Jesus was pouring out His tender mercy upon this poor widow who sat in the darkness of grieving for her dead son. But shortly He would change that darkness into light, giving her a reason to rejoice while guiding her into the way of peace with God. *Our Lord Jesus, who spoke Creation into being, not only comes to give life to the dead in this narrative of the Widow of Nain, but He also comes and gives eternal life to the sons of those who die in the Lord.*

Touching the funeral bier, He says to the corpse, ***"Young man, I say to you, arise."*** (v. 14) Jesus does the unthinkable, He risks becoming ritually unclean by touching the corpse. However, instead of being defiled, He cleanses and heals. He changes death to life. He alters a dismal future for one of hope. The power of holiness and life are in Him. He purifies the unclean, He fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah, ***"Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead."*** (Isaiah 26:19, ESV) Furthermore, unlike His earlier healings which spoke of the faith of the one being healed, here there is no mention of faith. The ultimate healing power of Christ is not dependent on the faith of the person being healed, but only on His divine power and might. By His word alone, the sick are healed, and the dead raised.

No more had Jesus spoken when ***"the dead man sat up and began to speak."*** (v. 15) This is the first time that Jesus performs the prophetic miracle of a resurrection. This is the ultimate statement that Jesus is the eschatological prophet to come. He is the Messiah. When Jesus raises the widow's son, the crowd in fear and awe glorify God, saying, ***"A great prophet has arisen among us!"*** and ***"God has visited his people!"*** (Luke 7:16, ESV) The people are overwhelmed with our Lord's action, giving all glory to God in an act of faith. Oh, that the world could see what these people of Nain saw. Oh if only the world could believe that God gives eternal life to all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Here the world witnesses the power of Christ to rescue men from the bondage of death. Moreover, this resurrection foreshadows the resurrection of Jarius' daughter, and Lazarus, and our Lord's own resurrection. This Jesus, this Christ, has the power over life and death, including the living dead, those who have not yet seen or heard. But with the power of the Holy Spirit, whom God the Father and the Son shall send, the living dead shall soon see and hear and believe. Pastors are given the same command from Christ as Jesus gave John the Baptist's disciples, ***"Go and tell . . . what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."*** (Luke 7:22–23, ESV) The Great Commission of the church is to go and baptize while telling the world that Christ Jesus is the Prince of Life who gives eternal life to all who believe in Him. Therefore, our most ardent prayer is that the Church will always proclaim the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ. That the Church will always proclaim the truth that our Lord Jesus Christ has power over life and death, and that He offers believers life after earthly death in the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day.

When Adam sinned in the Garden, he hung the yoke of sin around our necks. But God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to remove that yoke from our necks and place it on His own. He did this so He could carry that yoke to the Altar of the Cross and by His death destroy its burden, eternal death in hell. By His death He brought eternal life to all who believe. He touched our funeral biers and gave us life eternal with Him and all the saints who have gone before us.

So today, when we attend the funeral of a loved one, and hear the pastor recite the Gospel truth; ***"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*** (John 3:16, ESV) or ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."*** (John 5:24, ESV) these words of Christ give us great comfort that our beloved brother or sister in Christ who has been called from this vale of tears now resides in God's kingdom of glory, living the promise of the Gospel, eternal life.

Christ is *The Creator who Came to Re-Create Fallen Man*. He did this by His death upon the Altar of the Cross. On that cursed tree He poured out His life's blood fulfilling the mission His heavenly Father had sent Him to accomplish, the rescue of man from sin, death, and the devil by His death and resurrection. Reception of this blessed rescue is affirmed by St. Paul, ***"if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."*** (Romans 10:9–10, ESV) Faith is the hand that grabs the rescuer.

No shame, no sorrow, no grieving only joy knowing that they who die in the Lord do not die but are transformed from this life to a life of un-surpassing joy. Indeed, the life one lives in this world appears glorious, but compared to the un-surpassing joy of eternal life, this life has no glory at all. St. Paul reminds us, ***"For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory."*** (2 Corinthians 3:11, ESV) And St. John tells us, ***"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?"*** (1 John 5:4–5, ESV)

Christ conquered death that we may have eternal life in Him. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the Peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.