

Luke 7:11-17  
June 5, 2016

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Well, we are into that time of the church year when things seem to slow down a bit. Beside perhaps Vacation Bible School, the education programming takes a bit of a sabbatical letting the students who attend, the parents who so faithfully bring them, and those dedicated teachers all rest, recharge, and gear up for another year. Pastors and church staff may also take some time off or find time to attend to some continuing education events, as I will depart for later today in Dubuque. It's a season when many are busy with vacations, summer activities, and simply basking in the warmth of the sun. And there is nothing wrong with this. It is also a season many, many weeks removed from the miracle of Easter morning and months away from celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior and at times we may find ourselves simply sitting back and becoming a bit complacent. Long gone are those glorious Easter hymns, the fragrant lilies, and the shouts of our Easter proclamation, "Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!" These all have faded away and our ears may have fallen prey to the noise of the world, which often pulls us away from hearing the promises of God, seeing God's presence in our midst, and proclaiming day after day that Easter

miracle to a world clinging to find hope and life where it seems death so often surrounds us.

And that is exactly why we gather Sunday after Sunday? To have an encounter with the living God, to hear the news God is alive and active in the world, to be fed with the bread of life, to hear the promise of forgiveness, to be reminded that in our Baptism we are children of God, and to be reassured of the promise that through our Savior's death and resurrection we will live with Him eternally. That's exciting news isn't it? Don't we just want to run out in awe and spread that good news to the world? After all, that's what happened in our gospel story today. Luke lifts up a model of discipleship for the church in response to God's endless compassion, mercy, and presence in the lives of God's people. That model is to stand in awe of God's grace, glorify God by giving thanks and praise (i.e., worship) and then guided by the Spirit go and spread the news that "God has looked favorably on God's people."

It does seem simple (i.e., spreading the good news of God's love) but we know it's not. In fact, for most of us it is the exact opposite of simple – it's downright hard and scary. Many of us might prefer a root canal over telling another individual how God is alive and making a difference in our lives. It's easy to read a text like this and respond by thinking – well, of course, these people in our gospel passage this morning spread the news. It was easier!

After all, they just witnessed a dead man be brought to life. Who wouldn't go tell that news? Yet, it probably wasn't as simple as it might seem. Indeed, what the people witnessed was a miracle. It was something to be overcome by fear. It was something to give praise to God, and it was something to go and tell. However, I suspect many were hesitant to share this news in fear of being rejected, laughed at, and flat out being called crazy. Dead people don't come to life. That's impossible. Only God can do that and now you are telling me some carpenter from little known and out-of-the-way Bethlehem has brought back to life a dead man. That's not exactly an easy message to sell; yet, that is the very message we are called to proclaim and that our faith hinges upon.

I think it is human nature to make the jump and perhaps try to find an out in facing our fears of spreading the news by saying "this would have been easier if we had been present like the people in the text." While perhaps we haven't witnessed a dead person be brought back to life; although, we know it does happen where people have been dead without a pulse and suddenly come back to life, isn't resurrection more than simply raising the dead? Can't resurrection be anything which bring new and abundant life? Is not resurrection being led out of the darkness and into the light of Christ? Is not God alive and active when a one church closes and a new one springs forth

somewhere else? Is not God overcoming death when an addict cries out for help and finds the strength and support to overcome the destructive forces of an addiction and finds life in sobriety? Is not God's hand visible when we pray for the church, the world, and all in need each Sunday? Is not God's grace evident each time God promises us forgiveness for our sins? Is not Jesus' compassionate touch which brings forth wholeness and healing visible, even despite the fact we are not always miraculously cured of our physical ailments, through such acts as the warm embrace of a loved one or friend, a simple card in the mail offering words of encouragement, love, and support, or a prayer spoken on their behalf! God is active in the world and in the lives of God's people transforming hearts and equipping us to be God's hands and feet in the world.

This is what we gather to hear, to see, to experience and be a part of, and to be sent out to proclaim each and every Sunday. Jesus comes to us and meets us in the midst of whatever it is we are experiencing, just as He did this grieving mother, and He offers us a compassionate touch, words of healing, and the promise of new life, hope, and the strength to move forward and proclaim yet again the Easter miracle, "Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!" Thank you for being present this morning faithful people of God and I invite you to look around – not just today but next week and in the

weeks to come. Maybe you have noticed or will notice another fellow brother or sister has been absent for some time and are left wondering what can we do? Here is what we can do together as the body of Christ: pray for them, call them, email them, send them a card, and simply let them know how much they are missed, how much they are part of our community, and how much God cares for them. Thank you! Amen.