

Luke 7:11-17

February 16, 2020

“Join the Parade”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

6th S.A. Epiphany

Vicar Miguel Gonzalez-Feliciano

Grace, Mercy and Peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Death]

Death. It's the end of life here on earth. It's never been a surprise and for many people it occupies their thoughts on a consistent basis. Some people can get by for many years without thinking about death. For most people, death doesn't take up any of your thoughts until you experience it in your own life.

Children.

Brothers and Sisters.

Parents and Spouses.

When people die, there is a grief that comes over the people who are left behind. In funerals, you and I gather as God's people and we offer up our grief to our God. Grief is offered up to God because God has defeated death. Though the pain is real, the tears may fall, our God is good, He has conquered life. He has visited His people.

Christ has risen.

[Parades of Life and Death]

The Widow at Nain understood this very well. In our reading today, she is leading a funeral parade. Her son, her only son, has died and needs to be buried. She is leading a crowd of people around Nain; scripture tells us that the size of the crowd she was leading was “a considerable crowd from town”.

Probably with tears streaming down her face, she knew on that day, there would be a burial and the body would be returned to God and she wouldn't see her son alive again. Until she ran into an altogether different parade.

This parade had a completely opposite tone. These people were following one person. But He was alive, healthy and whole. He led them around, and they weren't a couple of people, but a great crowd. Perhaps they were buzzing with excitement after they had witnessed this man heal a centurion's daughter with just a word. Maybe the people were enamored with His teachings, perhaps they just wanted to see more miracles, or maybe the large crowd of people were just bored, and this was the most interesting person they'd seen in some time. To the widow, I'm sure it didn't matter she was crying and they were not.

This was a funeral for her son. Their "parade" would have to stop. On the day of her son's funeral, I'm sure she felt that there was no reason to have joy. Nobody she wanted to see more than her son.

In that moment, two parades clashed together. A parade of life and a parade of death. Now, in the world, the polite thing to do for the parade of outsiders would have been to apologize and join the funeral procession. After all, this widow's only son has died and she is trying to grieve, the tears are falling, and she probably looks like she just wants to get this over with. But God is good, and in that moment when life and death clash, Jesus rises out from the crowd. He has compassion. More accurately, the Greek word is "ἐσπλαγχνίσθη" which means Jesus felt compassion in a gut-wrenching and real sense. His guts were moved to compassion. And he approaches the widow of Nain and Christ says, "Μὴ κλαῖε".

[Stop Crying]

Now, most professors say that seminarians should avoid using Greek in a sermon. I won't tell if you don't. Most of the same professors say something else, "A little bit of Greek goes a long way." In this moment, Jesus is face to face with a grieving widow, and His words are "Stop crying." Of course, this might seem harsh to you and I. Why would Jesus tell this woman to stop crying? This desire might be why most translators choose to gloss it over as "do not cry". However, in this moment, the difference is crucial. Jesus isn't being uncaring or lacking in compassion. He has a gut-wrenching reaction similar to the one you and I experience during times of deep sorrow. Jesus isn't commanding her in some harsh way. God the Son is looking after His creation. God is visiting His people. God is making a command because He is about to do something miraculous. He is taking her grief from her.

Then He touches the bier.

Ceremonially, this is sacrilegious. Surely, both parades were aghast. Now, Jesus was ceremonially unclean. This was something unnecessary. Both parades of life and death were waiting with bated breath. And then this Jesus shows He has conquered death.

"Young man, I say to you, arise."

[Arise]

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, then the young man arose. In the most miraculous way possible, God rose that young man from the dead with just His almighty word and a touch! Of course, the people were afraid, of course they glorified God! In just one moment both parades of life and death joined in the most beautiful way.

Everyone had joined the parade of life, all because Christ had visited His people. Obviously, the report of Jesus spread throughout the whole of Judea and the surrounding country.

[A Great Prophet Has Arisen]

Our God is good, He has visited His people, conquered death and a great prophet has arisen. The tears and pain you and I experience here on Earth are as real as the widow who lost her only son. When death visits us, there can be the temptation to give into grief, but Christ has shown Hospitality to us by inviting us to join His parade. This parade follows Christ and gives Him their grief when loved ones pass away. Christ takes the grief upon himself on the cross and He tells us to stop crying. Because one day, Christ will come to the gravesite.

The gravesite of:

Our children.
Our brothers and Sisters.
Our Parents and Spouses.
You.

And Christ will come and say, “I say to you, arise.” And as surely as I stand before you today, that body will be risen. In the glory of God, those who have passed away in the faith will be risen and on the last day there will be only one parade. Christ will invite His dear children to join the parade of everlasting life. our God is good, He has conquered life. He has visited His people.

Christ has risen.
I’ll see you at the parade.
So be it, Amen.

As followers of Christ, “Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” AMEN! (1Pt 4:8-9)
