

“God’s Visit Brings Life”

St. Luke 7:11-17

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SERMON 1939

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Our sermon text is from Sy. Luke 7:16, “Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has risen up among us’; and, ‘God has visited His people.’”

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week, we were assured that there is no need to worry. Our gracious heavenly Father takes care of birds and flowers and you are much more valuable than they. Our Lord will surely take care of you. We learned, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.” But in this week’s reading all of the Christians, who are seeking first the kingdom of God, have **troubles, persecution and inner battles** waging against them. Therefore, **we are directed to seek God’s comfort and consolation** in His compassion for us and in His ultimate purpose to bring us the victory of life over death.

St. Paul begins today’s Epistle by telling the Ephesian believers that they are not to be concerned about his imprisonment in Rome and his tribulations. Sometimes it is **the distress of others** that throws us into confusion. When it is the distress, especially of our spiritual leaders, it may bother us even more. St. Paul had taught them the faith and led them to Christ. I’m sure that other false preachers had taken advantage of this situation to speak poorly of St. Paul. “The Jews surely don’t like him, and now the Romans, under Emperor Nero, are seeking to kill him. Is that your leader?” St. Paul tells them, “Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.”

In today’s Holy Gospel, a woman is being accompanied by a large crowd—it is a funeral procession. She has definitely experienced great distress. **First of all**, her husband has died and she is left a widow. This woman loses her companion in this world. The support of marriage has left her vulnerable in society, love, and finances. Our enemy death, by its forced separation, causes great loss and trouble. **Second**, her son has died. All of the worldly concerns return once again as a source of anxiety and loss.

You may buck up under last week’s sermon, **but how long**—as St. Paul says—**before you grown weary because of the afflictions?** How long before your inner confidence begins to question. “I may have lost my husband, but at least I have my son.” But then even that is taken away. What will it take? Will you lose your job, your loved ones, your home? First it is your health which suffers. Then you lose your independence and must face a loss of mobility. Your strength and stamina falter, and you must leave your home to be cared for by others. You are not able to be present with friends at church.

Today I am more concerned with the inner battles of the conscience. My intent is not to minimize the loss of companionship and worldly security. Those are real problems, and the Lord will provide for you. **But it is the inner battles of the conscience that can determine whether we are able to get through outward troubles and persecution.** When this woman loses both her husband and her son, the conscience surely begins to question, whether God is providing for her or not. The conscience cries out that she must have done something wrong to experience this load of grief. Our sinful nature usually comes to the conclusion that either God does not care or He is fighting against us.

Like Job, your friends don't understand the personal trouble which is going on within. Although Job has experienced one loss after another and well beyond anything which we will undergo, the entire book of Job is not about his family, goods, or health. Job wishes to know **answers which will quiet the conscience and give peace.**

Simeon comes to terms with his own mortality and says, "Now I can depart in peace...." The imprisoned St. Paul tells us in Philippians 4:11-13, "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." St. Paul's imprisonment leads him not to lose heart, but even to seek to comfort the Ephesians.

Why, or rather how, can St. Paul do this in the midst of trouble and the persecution he experiences because of his profession of Jesus Christ? **How can we face our outward troubles and fight the inner turmoil of the conscience?** The answer is taught us in today's Epistle and it is shown us in today's Holy Gospel.

St. Paul says that God showers out His riches upon us so that we are strengthened to face even the greatest troubles. This is not an outward strength which comes from wealth, outward security or strong friends, but instead that which does not depend on our circumstances. St. Paul says, "...to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." **Our strength come from faith in the heart in the inner man.**

When the mammon of this world falters, we have a fear and love of God in our heart. We have faith, that is trust in our good heavenly Father, that teaches us that our sins have been forgiven. **The inner battle is always about the Law's accusation that we are unworthy of God's love and thus we are getting what we deserve. The solution is always found in the forgiveness of sins which answers the law's claims. The Gospel message is that Jesus took what we deserved and thus we now receive the love of Jesus. Our sins are forgiven.**

The inner battle is overcome when we know the love of Jesus toward us. St. Paul goes on to say "that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Through the preaching of the Word, we have learned of the great love of Christ toward us. His love goes far beyond any other love. The more we learn of Christ, the more we see His great love—"the width and length and depth and height" of Christ's love for us. When we understand Christ's love, then the fullness of God lives in us. When our conscience is confident of Christ, then none of the devil's arrows can lead us

to lose heart. With forgiveness, we can even be imprisoned with St. Paul. The circumstances don't matter.

Today's Holy gospel shows us "the width and length and depth and height" of Christ's love in the account of this widow who is burying her son. The death parade is leaving the city and going to the graveyard. The life parade of Jesus and His church is coming into the city.

First and foremost, let me say that Jesus has come to bring life over death. The entire purpose for His visit to earth was to take on human flesh. Though His own suffering and death in human flesh, Jesus defeated sin and death. The threatening attacks of the devil designed to keep us in fear, were disarmed by the forgiveness of sins and the resurrection from the dead.

Just as God's Son took on our human condition and volunteered to come and save us, so Jesus' heart of compassion goes out to this woman at His direction. Jesus sees this woman's situation and fully understands her grief and sorrow. Even while she was still in the midst of grief, and even before she could speak or act, Jesus poured out His riches upon her. Jesus stops the death parade and gives her back her son. Not only can our God provide you with food and drink and clothing for this life, but Jesus also provides life instead of death.

What Jesus does for her, gives her back her son, but this account is recorded for our benefit. We are to learn that our Lord is not punishing us for our sins, no matter what the circumstance. Jesus' heart of compassion goes out to us. By this action He is assuring us that He can and has defeated death. Jesus has a plan that includes a resurrection from the dead on the last day. The fulfillment of that plan is never in doubt.

Jesus raised this boy from the dead. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Jesus raised a little girl from the dead. And finally three days after He had died and was buried, he raised Himself from the dead. Death is a meager opponent who must give way to our Lord. The death parade will be ruined when Jesus' life parade comes to town.

The text says, "Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us'; and, 'God has visited His people.'" When we see that in Jesus is the visitation of our God, there is fear. For we have sinned. But when we see that His compassion moves Him to help us and His purpose is to bring life over death, then we love God and glorify Him. The God who comes to visit His people, is the God who comes bringing forgiveness that we might not die but live.

With the Scriptural knowledge of "the width and length and depth and height" of Christ's love for us, we do not lose heart. Our inner conscience is at peace. Whether we live or whether we die, we are with the Lord. Death is no impediment to him. St. Paul teaches us that God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think." How that for over the top love? Even the possibility that Jesus could raise her son hadn't entered this mother's mind, nor did she ask. Jesus did exceedingly and abundantly above all that we thought was possible.

But now that we have the report of Jesus, we know that Jesus raises the dead. We look forward to His promise to raise us up from the dead on the last day. We know of His compassion for us. We know of His forgiveness. We know of power over death and the grave. When Christ dwells in our heart through faith, we have a conscience that is set at peace and rest. No matter what the circumstance, we have patience in

tribulation and confidence in the inner man. Being rooted and grounded in the love, do not lose heart on our way to eternal life with Christ in heaven.