

Trinity 16 –
September 26 – 27, 2009 –
“Life from Death”
Luke 7:11-17

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Our text for today is the raising of the widow of Nain's son, with focus on the words, **He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.”**

It's kind of nice to have Easter in September, isn't it? Easter has a way of bringing focus to the Christian faith like nothing else. Easter points us to Jesus death on the cross. It points us to all of the disappointments and failures of our own lives. It shows us lost opportunities and a gentle reminder of our own approaching death. But it does all of this from the other side of Holy Baptism. In Easter you see your life, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit of Christ that now dwells in you by water and Word. Easter means hope for you. Easter means a future. Easter means an eternal ring of alleluias to God for bringing us out of death and sin and into the marvelous light of His own life.

In our Gospel reading this morning we get a picture of what is coming, the impending eternity that breaks into your life by the holy waters. This poor woman is leaving Nain with her dead son. She is a widow. She has no money, no family, no hope. All she has is a bunch of people following after her, crying. I'm sure she was comforted that they were crying with her, but at that point in time, she needed more than simply tears.

While she is on the way, death meets Life in the road. Jesus meets them coming into town. He sees them coming. What a blessed interruption!

Can you imagine the scene? What could be more scandalous than two big crowds meeting in the middle of the road? Death meets life. It's like a battle in the streets, only we know who will come out victorious. Jesus sees her, and has compassion on her. He loves her with an everlasting love. He looks to His own cross and death and empty tomb and says to her, do not weep.

Now I have had loved ones die. I know, as well as most of you know, that this is not exactly the most comforting thing to hear when you have had a loved one die. Don't mourn! You must be joking. Nothing will ever be the same again. Don't mourn! Please. You don't understand what I'm going through. Don't mourn! Go away, she might well have been thinking.

But when Jesus says do not mourn, he says it for a reason. He reaches out, and touches the coffin. He does not fear death and its stench. He does not fear that He will become unclean by the dead touch of her son. No. He touches the coffin. Unthinkable in Jesus' day, but then, so was rising from the dead.

He touches the coffin, and the crowd and those around stood still. Can you see the scene? What's He going to do? He can't weep with the mourners. He's just touched the coffin. You could hear a pin drop. Jesus then says the words to that young man that brought hope for all those around, **young man, I say to you, arise. Arise. Get up.** And so he who was dead sat up and began to speak. In Greek we can see that the risen man wasn't whispering or mumbling. No, he was calling out. I wonder what he said? Whatever it was, I bet it was something to hear. So then Jesus presents the young man to his mother.

It has been said, *Jesus never meets a corpse that doesn't sit up right on the spot* (Robert Farrar Capon). Luther in his great Easter hymn calls the battle between life and death a strange and dreadful strife. This is how our battle with death looks, to be sure. Our battle with death is dark, mysterious, and almost always painful. Another pastor once said that death is the greatest preacher the Law ever had. When we look at death, either our own or someone else's, it reminds us so clearly that there is no getting

out of death. The mortality rate for humanity is 100%. But in Christ, even in death you are victorious.

What you have here in our text this morning, dear friends, is your own resurrection in short form. You are dead in trespasses and sins, but by the mercy of God, Jesus called out to you and said, **I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.** You were bought with a price, the price of His own blood. When Jesus raised this young man from the dead, He did so knowing that He would rise from the dead. And because Jesus rose from the dead, you too shall rise. And your loved ones. And those who died in Christ from floods or fires or terrorists or old age or heart attacks or cancer or whatever else this sick world may throw at us. God can do more, much more, than we can even believe possible.

This is the very essence of the Christian faith, dear baptized. It isn't a philosophy or a way of life. It isn't a self-help plan or finally something about your behavior. No. The Christian faith is about Jesus raising you from the dead by the power of His own resurrection. The Christian faith is delivered to you in water, Word and holy food. This faith always has more to give than we can even consider, because God has big plans for us, plans that will last to all eternity. As St. Paul wrote in our Epistle: **"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever."** Amen. (Ephesians 3:20 - 21)