

**XVI TRINITY 2019**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**ST. LUKE 7.11-17**

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“I am the resurrection and the life”...the opening sentence from the Burial Office in the *Book of Common Prayer*...sums up the whole New Testament teaching about our resurrection and eternal life as grounded upon our faith in our Lord.

Jesus came to bring us out of darkness and death into light and life...his death and resurrection is the guarantee we won't stay dead forever...and he promises those who die believing in him will join him in heaven on the last day.

Today's Gospel is perhaps the most touching healing story about Jesus doing what he does best...restoring lives and making them whole again. It is a story that tugs at the heart...the story of a widowed mother taking her only son who has died to his grave. He was a young man. His death was sudden and unexpected...making the story all the more compelling.

Parents aren't supposed to bury their children. It's supposed be the other way around. For the widowed mother in the Gospel, her whole world has just come crashing down all around her. Her only son provided for all her needs...now he is dead. Who will take care of her now?

The Gospel doesn't give us any details about the widowed woman...but we do get the sense she had no other relatives. Her future looked bleak at a time when social services didn't exist and work opportunities for women were rare. Whatever hope she had for a comfortable life died with her son.

Jesus is filled with pity when he sees the funeral procession heading toward the cemetery...but he tells the mother to stop crying. He touches the boy's casket and says, “Young man. I am telling you now, get up!” The boy sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. Her despair and sorrow were immediately replaced by joy and hope. We can only imagine the mother's reaction!

Jesus might have been thinking about his impending death and his own mother. He

would make certain she would be care of by John...he would be her son an she would be his mother.

God does not like to see his people suffer. He wants their lives to be whole and complete. Jesus raised the boy from death and gave him back to his mother. Jesus shows us he has ultimate power over sin and death and power to restore people's lives and make them whole again.

There is an important distinction to be made between the eternal life Jesus promises us and the miraculous restoration of the young man's life in the Gospel. Jesus gave the young man back to his mother and we hope he provided for his mother and lived life to the fullest. He would experience physical death again at some point in the future.

Today we have technological miracles that let us restore life to someone whose vital signs have ceased...bringing him back from the brink of death...restoring wholeness to his life and those around him who love him. And we have medical professionals and hospice workers who care for those whose life is about to end...giving them dignity...and for those who believe in Jesus...the clear understanding death is truly not the end...it is the beginning of everlasting life.

Later this morning we will commemorate the life of Saint Francis of Assisi...with our Annual Blessing of Animals in the Saint Francis Garden. Francis used his gift of compassion to help the poor and destitute people he encountered...he gave them what a society that disenfranchised them couldn't give them...hope in this life...assurance of a better life to come. It is the basic message Christianity has to offer too all who will listen.

Through the Gospels...Jesus shows us he is God's son who loves us. He didn't leave the widowed mother without hope and he doesn't leave us without hope either...hope for a better life now...and hope for everlasting life in heaven. Jesus offers us life...not death! Saint Francis understood this and we can learn by his example.

“I am the resurrection and the life,” Jesus tells us. “Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.” What we are called to do today...is to BELIEVE...so we might LIVE!

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