

XVI Trinity 2021
Sermon-Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Ephesians 3.13-21 St. Luke 7.11-17



The Burial Office in the *Book of Common Prayer* commences with three compelling anthems. The first is from John's Gospel...

...I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.

Father Massey Shepherd, author of the *American Prayer Book Commentary* writes this anthem, "sums up the whole New Testament teaching about our resurrection and eternal life as grounded upon faith in Jesus."

The second is from Job...

...I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand on the latter day upon the earth: and though this body be destroyed, yet shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger.

Father Shepherd calls this anthem "the most beautiful statement in all the Old Testament of unswerving trust and hope in God despite tortuous bodily affliction and decay."

The third is from Job and First Timothy and combines both Testaments...

...We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.

Father Shepherd writes this anthem "points to the transitory nature of earthy life and its utter dependence upon the goodness of God, Who alone, in the mystery of His providence, gives us mortal breath and takes it away."

In this morning's Gospel, Jesus and his disciples are on the outskirts of the small town of Nain, when they encounter a funeral for a dead man who was the only son of a widow. His death was sudden and unexpected. His mother wondered who would take care of her? Social services didn't yet exist. Her opportunities for a comfortable life were extremely limited. She was crying not only for her son whom she loved, but also out of despair for an uncertain future.

The Gospel tells us when Jesus saw our grieving mother his heart was filled with pity. Jesus doesn't like seeing people suffer. We don't like seeing people suffer either, especially young children. Our hearts are filled with pity even for people we don't know. We want to do something to make things better. We pray at every Mass for those who are in "trouble, sorrow, need, sickness or any other adversity".

Jesus wanted to do something to make the mother's sadness go away. He told her to stop crying; things were going to be OK. He then touched the boy's casket and said, "Young man, I tell you to get up". The boy sat up and began speaking. He must have wondered what was happening. Jesus gave the boy back to his mother. He cancelled the boy's funeral and turned a mother's grief into joy and hope.

There is a difference between the raising of the dead man people saw as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah...and the real purpose of Jesus' Mission...which was to make possible for us...eternal life in heaven. We're told nothing about what happened to the young man and his mother. We do know at some point in the future...hopefully after living a long and prosperous life...he died again.

Jesus didn't leave the widowed mother from Nain without hope and he doesn't leave us without hope either. He tells us not to worry about death, because he has gone to make his Father's house ready for us. He gives us his promise we will be reunited with him and our loved ones in heaven. We convey this message of hope at every funeral held in this place. The Requiem Mass is ultimately about life...not death.

The basic Gospel message is one of hope...as Father Shepherd said...in spite of how complicated and messy life can get. He reminds us of our total and complete dependence upon God, who has revealed his love and mercy to us through his son, Jesus.

Jesus has cancelled our debt to God by his death on the cross. He has made eternal life with him in heaven possible. He has given us back to God.

Hope is what we are all about...it's a message we can't keep to ourselves.

