

Pentecost 3 [Pr 5]      6/5/16  
Luke 7:11-17            C

“WHEN THE LORD SAW HER, HE HAD COMPASSION ON HER AND SAID TO HER, ‘DO NOT WEEP’.”

“Lord, now you are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation” (Lk 2). You recognize those words of Simeon. After the birth of our Lord Jesus, his parents took Him to the Temple in accordance with the law of God. At the Temple, Joseph and Mary met a man named Simeon. Simeon was a devout Christian. God had made known to him that he would not die before he had seen his Savior, the Christ. Simeon took his Savior Jesus, the Christ-child, into his arms and confessed his faith with those blessed words. Knowing that Jesus was his Savior, he was ready to die, to go to heaven to be with the Lord.

Those words of Simeon are the words we sing after eating our Lord's Body and drinking His Blood in Holy Communion. We sing those words as did Simeon. Having seen our Savior in His Body and Blood, we are ready at any time to depart this vale of tears for the mansion of glory, knowing that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We have this hope, this confidence, this joy because even in the face of our greatest enemy, death, Jesus says, “Don't weep! Do not cry!”

Our Beautiful Savior gives us the reason why we should not cry before cruel death: “Because I live, you also will live” (Jn 14). Jesus Christ has removed the sting of death, “Our Savior Christ Jesus [has] abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel” (2 Tm 1). This is what our Gospel teaches us this morning.

“Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him”. It was no accident that Jesus went to Nain.

Jesus, being God, knew that in Nain was a widow stung by the sting of death. Our lesson continues, "As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow". The pain of this widow was indeed great. Her only son was dead. As she had laid him in his first earthly bed after his birth, she would now lay him to rest in the seemingly eternal bed of the grave. And to cause further pain, she was a widow. She had buried her husband, just as she was now burying her only son. She was no stranger to loss and sorrow.

And, that meant she had a great concern, a concern for her daily bread. Now that her husband and her only son were dead, who would care for her? It is important for us to remember that there was no social security at this time; there was no such thing as life insurance. If a widow was to survive, she was forced to live with her children. But, now the only fruit of her womb was dead.

This widow wept. In the face of death, we weep. The pain of the sting of death caused her to weep, and it causes us to weep. As we weep, the voice of God come to us, "Do not weep". When God breathed life into us, He gave to us the eternal life that was His. We were given life so that we would live forever in the presence of God.

But, sin destroyed all the good intentions of Almighty God. Death was not the plan of God. Death came as a result of sin, "the wages of sin is death", the Bible teaches us. The Apostle St. Paul writes, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Ro 5). We will all die because we have sinned. A surgeon once said it this way in a lecture on the progress of modern medicine, "Do not forget...that with all this

advancement, the mortality rate remains at 100%."

We were bound for the grave, and we were helpless to free ourselves from the clutches of death. If we were to be spared cruel death, it was up to God to free us from death.

"When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep'." The Lord of life saw this widow burying her only son. Jesus did not merely see the tears flowing from her eyes; much more, He saw into her heart. Jesus knew and understood the pain the sting of death had inflicted upon her. As much as it displeased her that her only son was dead, it displeased Jesus far more. And so, the Prince of Life stepped in front of the funeral procession and reached out to touch where this dead young man lay, to stop the procession. The Lord Jesus Christ stepped in the way of death! Eternal life confronted eternal death! The Rev. Dr. Luther said it with these words: "[The Lord of life]...opposes death as the One who has the might and power over it." Jesus, seeing this widow's pain, proclaimed to all that death was finished; that God had meant for us to live and live we would.

At the graveside of his friend Lazarus, "Jesus wept." Luther notes that Jesus did not simply weep for Lazarus only, but for Mary and Martha and all humanity, over what sin had done to us, chiefly casting its wages of death upon us. Jesus weeps, knowing the pain and agony we have brought on ourselves by our sin. He knows how much death and the grave hold us in terror. God knew that if He did not act, we would be eternally condemned in spiritual death.

God's answer to death is that He restores life. God used Elijah to restore the life of the widow's son. Jesus restored the life of the widow's son at Nain. And, God raises us to eternal life in Jesus.

The Good News of the Gospel is this -- the Prince of Life came into this world to die. Jesus was not subject to death because He had no sin. Death had no hold nor rule over Him. But yet, His entire life was a mission to give His life on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Our Savior Jesus Christ came into this world for no other reason than to take upon Himself the sins of all the world and die as the sacrifice for them all. Our Savior Himself said to us, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20)."

Upon the cross, Jesus died for our sins, in our place, as our substitute, and then was raised for our justification. Christ's resurrection is so important and comforting to us because it means that we will rise in Christ to eternal life, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (Jn 11).

Rejoice and be glad, Dear Christian Friends, for death and the grave cannot hold us. Jesus, the Prince of Life, gives us His Easter resurrection to us in our baptism. "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death...For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Ro 6). As Jesus lives eternally, we live eternally in Him.

Our funeral procession has come to a complete and total stop. Baptized and living in Christ Jesus, death holds no terror for us. In Christ, the Christian believer looks upon death as simply the gate through which we pass to enter Paradise.

"Blessed are those who mourn," Jesus says, "for they shall be comforted" (Mt 5:4). As we live in the midst of wars and rumors of war, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, cancer and crime, we fear not, we

tremble not. This earth is not our home. Heaven is our home. We remember the words of Paul, “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself” (Ph 3).

In our confirmation vows, we vowed to continue steadfast in the Christian faith and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it. In the weakness of our sinful humanity, we cannot keep that vow. But, Jesus is with. He does His work in us through the Word and Sacraments, so that we may rejoice with St. Paul, “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom” (1 Tm 4:18).

To God be the Glory. Amen.