

Trinity 16

When the Lord saw her he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."

And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."

Two large crowds meet at Nain's city gate.

One is heading for Jerusalem; the other to the cemetery.

One is full of rejoicing; the other full of sorrow.

Death meets life and who will win? We see it enough to predict the outcome.

A healthy, teenage football player lies in a coma because of some little bacteria.

An entire family is wiped out because of a single drunk driver.

Death always seems to have the upper hand. Because, in order for life to go on, everything must be perfect, but death only has to shut down one system.

James says it this way: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is guilty of all." (2:10)

Death, corruption, infection and sin can ruin a life.

But life, perfection, health and good deeds cannot snuff out death.

But today, everything is different! Life swallows up death!

Jesus meets this death-march head-on and turns it back in its tracks.

For Jesus is not just a living thing meeting a dead man, He is the Lord of life.

He is the Only-begotten of the Father who meets the only-son of his mother.

This is not the first time that someone is raised from the dead.

The widow's son that we heard about a few minutes ago is another example.

And Elisha, later raises the son of a Schunnamite woman (2 Kings 4).

It is unusual--but not unheard of--for someone to rise from the dead.

But what Jesus does in Nain is different than Elijah and Elisha.

The prophets and apostles raised people from the dead, on occasion, by calling on the name of the Lord.

It was done with a power outside of themselves--and in response to their prayer.

But Jesus acts by His own authority: "Young man, I say to you, 'arise'."

Jesus does not call upon the Lord of life because He, Himself is the Lord of Life.

And since He is the Lord of life, we can now see, up-close and personal, exactly

HOW every resurrection from the dead occurs.

"He came and touched the open coffin." The Lord of life touches the dead body.

Jesus cares enough to touch him with His own hands...

But it is far more than a gesture of Affection. It is also one of Infection.

The saints of old were not as ignorant of medicine as we suppose.

They knew that dead bodies carry diseases that kill.

So, priests were forbidden from touching dead bodies which made them unclean.

And those unclean--infected with death--cannot be in the presence of the Lord.

For anyone who comes into the presence of the Lord while unclean, will surely die!

So, when Jesus touches the dead young man, He makes Himself unclean.

The uncleanness of death is also now infects His own body.

But Jesus Himself, in His own body, IS the presence of the Lord.

Therefore, in the same body, you have God's presence and uncleanness!

The two have come together in such a way that a clash is inevitable.

Here is the real clash of two worlds!

It happens not at the city gate of Nain, but in the very body of Jesus!

The Lord of Life meets uncleanness and death and dirties His hands with death!

He becomes unclean and now seals His fate, bring death to Himself.

The cross at Jerusalem must happen to Him because He now carries within His body the uncleanness of this young man's death.

And so Jesus didn't so much stop the funeral procession. He took it in Himself.

The dead man rises, but Jesus continues the solemn march to calvary's cross.

There Jesus, the unclean priest will be put to death for the uncleanness He bears.

"Who knew no sin became sin for us--that we might become God's righteousness."

You see, Jesus' does not only bear the uncleanness of this young man.

He also bears the uncleanness of every single unclean person whom He has ever touched physically.

"Therefore as by the offence of one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life." (Romans 5:18)

The leper, the deaf and dumb man, the demon possessed...

All of these we have heard about in the Gospel stories.

All of these have given over their uncleanness to die with Jesus at calvary.

But more than that. YOU TOO! Jesus also touches you.

His touch continues today as His words of life reach into your ears.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24

This is also what happens in Holy Baptism.

There, it is not just a man--some preacher--who touches you.

Jesus Himself is lays His hands on you in and through the water.

The rite itself indicates this as we read from Mark 10: "He laid His hands on them and blessed them..."

In your Baptism, Jesus is also taking your uncleanness to Himself.

By Baptizing you, He was sealing His fate--His death by torture at calvary.

So also at the altar today, the Lord touches you again with His own divine body.

Today again He takes your uncleanness into Himself.

In its place, He gives you life.

For even though your uncleanness causes Him to die in the flesh...

Jesus is not only flesh and bones but also the Lord of life!

Therefore, His death is swallowed up in victory.

He comes forth from the grave to show that even though He dies because of your sin and uncleanness, He remains the live-giving Lord!

It is for this reason that the young man from Nain arose from the coffin.

It is for this same reason that you are given life here, today.

Now, by Christ's touch, you have your uncleanness taken away and life --eternal life resides in you!

True, you will go through physical death--just as Jesus did.

But just as Jesus' death destroyed death and not the Lord of life...

So also your physical death does not negate the fact that the Lord of life dwells in you by faith and that you already have life in yourself.

For this reason, you can rejoice in the life you already have; be brave in the face of suffering and death; and have a certain hope of the resurrection on the last day.

For the Lord of life has had compassion on you and has touched your coffin.

AMEN.