

Sermon June 5, 2016 - Pentecost 3

The Change That Glorifies

Luke 7:11-17



Dear Friends in Christ,

Our meditation this morning is based on the Gospel reading for this day, Luke 7:11-17, which illustrates the fact that when God changes us, His name is glorified!

Now, we have all changed, haven't we? And I'm not taking about just this morning for example, we changed, didn't we?

I don't see a single pair of pajamas out there!

Now, seriously, we have changed! In the last few years we have learned things, seen new things, so we have changed. Others have grown taller, maybe a little thicker or thinner, we have changed. In fact since the moment of our conception we have experienced change.

But there is another kind of change, one that is essential and fundamental, the spiritual change God operates in us. A change that brings us from death into true life, and in the Gospel reading we see a glimpse of that as Jesus changes a young's man's condition bringing him from physical death to life again.

Here, with this miracle, we see that Jesus not only stand with us at the door of the gate of death, but is the gate to everlasting life, for he is the gate that bring us from death produce by sin, and because he is the gate, he raises us up to serve in the midst of the pain and loss, of ourselves and others, already producing a change in us, a change of life, life everlasting.

The picture that we have in today's Gospel is a sad one that we all relate to in one way or another: a widow who had lost her son. And perhaps he was her only son, and certainly her only support. Now we see her on her way to bury him. And even though she was being supported by her neighbors, her friends, and even by the people of the town who just wanted to support her, her pain was great. Just look at her face if

you could in your imagination, and tell me what do you see? You would agree that there is lots of pain in her heart, and that she is broken inside.

Yet, as if planned, Jesus arrives at the exact time when the funeral procession was approaching the town's gate. Jesus stops them, and with all authority brings the widow's son back to life, demonstrating with that marvelous work compassion for the woman. All is good with the widow now! She understood God's power and compassion.

What about the crowd? The crowd on the other hand, first fears, but then wonders at this great prophet and then after they glorify God because of Jesus. Luke the Evangelist says: "They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." (V. 16)

And from there Luke says: "This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. There is a change that produced glory!

Now, as we look at the scene, let's ask ourselves if we can relate to these people. And we can, for we too, in our own personal experiences we have known the pain of loss in our lives, because of sin, we have experienced loss of various kinds, but and certainly the hardest of all the loss of death, for it is the final loss.

Some have lost more than others, maybe a husband, a wife, a parent or even a child or grandchild, and even perhaps a good friend. We all relate in one way or another to the widow in our Gospel reading. King David writes of this kind of experience, in 2 Samuel 22:5-6 he says: "The waves of death swirled about me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. ⁶ The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me."

These verses reflect not only the fear and sentiment regarding death, but also what the death of a loved one means.

And like the Widow in our text of meditation, we also have known the difficulties and hardships of life, from poverty to the lack of natural resources even if we could afford them, to illness and sickness. Yet, just like in the story of the Gospel, we also have known the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Lord, and his work at the cross and empty tomb, and He has come to meet us right at the door, at the door of despair, at the door of suffering, and at the door of death itself, through the waters of baptism, through bread

and wine, Jesus comes to us to change us from death into life, life in Christ, life that now has meaning. There we have experience a change that produces glory! But are we giving God the glory?

When the Widow was met by Jesus, and when those who were comforting her saw what Jesus did, they began to glorify God, they begun to praise God for the work of Jesus in restoring life. But, they also began to spread the news about Jesus Christ.

What about us? Do we give God glory and do we spread the news about Jesus? We too have seen what Jesus can do, we ourselves have experience the rebirth of a new life in Christ. So what do we do? Or do we just stand as the crowd that has seen and known him, wondering what he will do next? Maybe that's what we do more often than not.

We like what He does, but for some reason we are not either so satisfied, or we like being surprised again, and again, and for some reason the surprise doesn't cat it for us anymore, so we lose attention. We lose focus, and we lose interest in Christ, and I the end we don't have anything to say. No interest, not passion, no nothing, as if what Christ has done isn't attractive enough, or not sufficient to our needs, or we use excuses...

"Once, a man said, "If I had some extra money, I'd give it to God, but I have just enough to support myself and my family." And the same man said, "If I had some extra time, I'd give it to God, but every minute is taken up with my job, my family, my clubs, and what have you; every single minute." And the same man said, "If I had a talent I'd give it to God, but I have no lovely voice; I have no special skill; I've never been able to lead a group; I can't think cleverly or quickly, the way I would like to."

And God was touched, and although it was unlike him, God gave that man money, time, and a glorious talent. And then He waited, and waited, and waited.....And then after a while, He shrugged His shoulders, and He took all those things right back from the man, the money, the time and the glorious talent. After a while, the man sighed and said, "If I only had some of that money back, I'd give it to God. If I only had some of that time, I'd give it to God. If I could only rediscover that glorious talent, I'd give it to God."

And God said, "What?" And the man told some of his friends, "You know, I'm not so sure that I believe in God anymore."

So what is it that we do then? Do we stand as the crowd that has seen the wonder and declares Jesus a great prophet? Or do we stand and testify, through the grace God has given us and the power of word through the Spirit that this is the Messiah of God, the one God has sent to help save His people?

Really this is the most important testimony we can give. Remember that He has died in our place, taking on the cross the sins of the whole world. He has raised all who believe and are baptized from deadness of the flesh, from original and actual sins, to a new resurrected life, giving us a new nature and new life. Yes we fear death, for it is ugly and as I usually say, it robs us of the natural beauty, but then again we all will taste this kind of death, but there is even a greater death, our separation from God, in which we are born into, and this is what we need to fear more than our natural death. Unless we are born again, we remain death forever. The door, our baptism becomes now, not a door of death but a door of life, of new life. That's why we confess when we say "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." We confess a change that glorifies.

So, today we are invited to embrace God's word and works, so that our faith may grow even stronger, and thus accomplish two purposes. The first, so we give thanks to God for our loved ones who have passed already from this valley of death into the realms of glory that The Lord won for us. And in doing so, the second purpose we are comforted that when the time of our death comes we too may look forward to the heavenly places already set for those who have been redeemed by His death and sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary for we are born again Christians. For He alone can give us comfort, for He is for us in our weakness, even in our death, defending us from eternal death, instead He has already intercepted us at the door, and rescued us given us a new life and a new hope. He has already changed us, and we are to give him glory!

Now because we have been given life, we now, can testify of our hope, and of Jesus, and we can do it by the way we react to the needs of the community. There is

much need, much despair and much evil, but we are to react in the same way Christ rescues us. In the same way God gives us a new resurrection and a new life. Now we can do it, and we must do it through works of love, always telling them why.

It is God's work through the Gospel that empowers us to employ that Word to transform the world, by the witness that we, too, have been saved and continue to be loved by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

He provides us opportunities to support and serve our neighbor, doing good works, not to gain our salvation but as a result of our faith in Christ.

Other religions are encouraged and commanded to preach and give testimony of what they have learned, many of them threaten with hell if they didn't do it. Yet they would do it so they will gain points in heaven. We don't do that, we don't give testimony of our faith so God gives us points, for in fact the points have been already won for us, those point are already there, freely given. However when we don't give testimony of God, then we might as well conclude that we are robbing from God what He as already given us.

For the points already won, forgiveness, salvation and the gift of the resurrection, really give us a new hope, a new hope that moves us to respond by giving testimony of what God has done in our lives.

We have an ally at the gate of death who in our deadness raises us like the widow's son, to newness of life and service in Christ.

God has changed us and that change shows God's glory—his mercy and grace to love those who were enemies through and through, from the very womb, loving us enough to send Jesus to die for us.

Our change brings God glory—when we live and walk with him. You've all changed! From fully developed enemies of God even before you were born to children of God who glorify him. And we pray that change will continue as the Word, just as you heard this morning, continue changing you!

In His name, amen.