
TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Year C. June 9, 2013

Theme: Raising the Dead

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We have all had to stand in that line at the funeral home and prepare to greet the family of the deceased.

What do you say to them?

How sorry you are for their loss.

How much the person will be missed.

But when the person was especially close, or when he or she died suddenly or tragically – finding the right words is especially tough, isn't it?

The Gospel presents Jesus and his disciples in just such a situation.

As they were about to enter the small Galilean town of Nain they encountered a funeral procession: a widowed mother was burying her only son.

What could Jesus say to the woman? What could anyone say: gee, sorry for your loss?

But we don't know the half of it: you see at that time the law was that when a widow's only son died all the family property reverted to the eldest living male relative of her dead husband: his eldest brother, or his eldest brother's son, or closest male cousin.

The woman could inherit nothing

In fact she was herself part of the inherited property.

She not only lost her only son: she lost her home, her freedom, virtually her life.

For women like this widow it was a situation of extreme injustice.

So again what was Jesus to say: Gee, I'm so sorry for you loss?

Actually isn't that's just about all Jesus or anyone of us could do in such a situation.

Ah, but listen how the Gospel writer Luke with one word transfigures the story from a tragedy of injustice into the triumph of justice.

Luke sweeps this story to a radically new level that will blow our socks off.

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

The one word that changed everything "Lord" - no longer "Jesus", "Lord," "Kyrios" in Greek, the Risen and Exalted Lord.

Luke with a word transposes the story from the time of the earthly ministry of Jesus into the reign of the Crucified and Risen One, the Victor over sin and death.

Now it is the "Lord" who tells the widow "Do not weep"; if anyone else said that it would be cruel and heartless."

The "Lord" tells the young man to "rise" and gives him back to his mother.

For Luke the story suddenly becomes one of how the Risen Lord transforms death into life, misery into joy, injustice into overwhelming justice.

On the level of strict story telling it does not follow, it doesn't make sense.

The Gospel writer did not stay in one time frame: he jumped from the time of the earthly Jesus to that of the exalted and risen Jesus.

He was trying to tell his readers that that injustices and sorrows of sin and death would not reign forever because Christ had conquered sin and death.

He was proclaiming the Good News that Christ could offer more than a sympathetic word to the grieving mother who lost her only son and an abused woman who was losing her whole life.

So what then can this text be for us?

For us it is a word of hope:

Hope that beyond the tragedies and injustices that can so often be part of our human lives there lies more, there lies a God who sees and cares.

The Gospel story told that when Jesus saw what was going on at the gates of the village of Nain he was **“moved with compassion”**.

He surely is moved with compassion when he sees the suffering and pain of so many among us today:

---those with diseases and painful medical conditions,

---those living in hunger, malnutrition and famine,

---so many in situation of violence, abuse, warfare, especially the sick, the elderly and children.

---women today still in situations of abuse, physical, sexual and emotional.

---those held prisoner, tortured, even executed unjustly.

The “Lord”, the Kyrios, the Victor over sin and death, sees and is moved with compassion.

We must ever hold out hope that the Lord will once again say: **“Do not weep.”**

Until that day we once again break the bread and drink the cup in his memory.