

XVI Trinity 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

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Ephesians 3.13-21 St. Luke 7.11-17



We are people of hope...Saint Paul tells us in his First Letter to the Thessalonians. We hear these words at every Requiem Mass celebrated in this parish. One of the basic messages of Christianity is HOPE...for life after death in God's Kingdom in Heaven.

Luke is the only Gospel writer to record Jesus raising a widow's son in a town called Nain. The town still exists today and is located about 50 miles north of Jerusalem in Southern Galilee.

Earlier in the Gospel, Luke tells us Jesus healed a Roman soldier's servant near his home town of Nazareth. He and his disciples and a large crowd are heading south when they encounter the funeral procession of a young man outside the town of Nain. The fact the young man was the only son of a widow makes this story all the more gut-wrenching.

We don't know anything about the boy, who he was, or the circumstances surrounding his death. We can surmise from the Gospel he was young and his death was sudden and unexpected. He would have been the provider for his widowed mother. Opportunities for widows to make in living in Biblical times were few and far between. There were no safety nets for the mother, unless she had a kind relative or friend to take her in. She must have felt things were hopeless.

The Gospel tells us when Jesus saw the mother's grief and tears his heart was moved with pity. God cries when people are hurting. Jesus came to wipe those tears away. He told the mother to stop crying, and touching the casket said to the boy, "Young man! Get up, I tell you." Jesus gave a command and raised the boy. Jesus has the power to conquer death and despair and restore hope. He gave the boy back to his mother.

The raising of the widow's only son is one of three resurrection stories in the New Testament. Jesus spent his much of his public ministry healing people from sickness and disease. He raised a synagogue leader's daughter from her deathbed. He raised Lazarus from his grave after he had been dead four days. What makes the raising of the widow's son different for the other resurrection stories?

The raising of the widow's only son was the first resurrection miracle of Jesus recorded in the New Testament. Jesus is always concerned about making people whole. He raises them from physical AND spiritual death. He reunites them with their families and friends. He cancelled the funeral of a young boy and turned a mother's grief into overwhelming joy and HOPE!

Perhaps Jesus was thinking about his own mother. Jesus knew how his public ministry would end...on the cross. But Jesus would make certain his own mother was taken care of and not left on her own. Saint John tells us how Jesus turned to Mary and said, "He is your son." He looked at John and said, "She is your mother." Jesus turned his own mother's grief into HOPE and entrusted her care to John.

The young man in today's Gospel was raised from the dead and given back to his mother. We don't know anything about his later life. We can be certain his life too was filled with joy and hope, until one day he would have to die again, hopefully after living a long and happy life.

Paul tells us in this morning's Epistle he wants us to know how broad, how high, and how deep is Christ's love for us. His love is so great he is able to do something we can't fully understand during this lifetime...conquer death.

Ultimately the resurrection stories in the Bible point to our own resurrections. The people who witnessed the raising of the widow's son called him a "great prophet". He is more than a "great prophet"; he is God's ONLY son. He cancelled the young man's funeral, restored his life, and gave him back to his mother. Jesus also cancels the fear and uncertainty we have over our own deaths.

Jesus didn't leave the widowed mother 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 forever.

And that means WE ARE PEOPLE OF HOPE!

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