

Second Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Text: Luke 7:11-17

Related text: Psalm 30

Galatians 1:11-24

1 Kings 17:17-24

Date preached: June 6, 2010

Note: This week was a shooting in Calumet

Psalm 30 concludes with these two verses. “You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.”

The words seem easy to read off the page, “You have turned my mourning into dancing.” Yet they were not so easy to hear by the woman whose son had died as was told in the reading from 1 Kings. She is angry. “What have you against me O man of God?”

Elijah does not like taking the blame for God here. In his forthright prayer to God he cries out and God listens. “...the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.” (1 Kings 17:22) Even in our anger, God hears us.

The mother whose son was raised by Elijah gives thanks acknowledging him as a bearer of God’s Word. Through Elijah, God led this woman through the anger she felt at her son’s death and into the joy of new life.

The reading from the Gospel of Luke presents us with a similar situation. We can certainly relate to the feeling this woman is experiencing. Going to the grave with the body of a loved one is the hardest walk for us to take. It was especially difficult for her given the societal component. Without a husband or a son, her ability to live in the first century society would be hard. As a widow, without family she'd be totally dependent upon the goodness of the community.

Thus, when the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her. He stopped what he was doing. Jesus touched the brier. Jesus spoke "Young man, I say to you, rise!" Even the dead obey the voice of the living Lord and Savior. Thus those in this funeral procession experienced the radical change from sorrow to abundant joy. Their mourning was turned to dancing.

The witness of these events from the Bible offer us hope in the context of our grieving and sorrow, especially in the backdrop of the violent events in Calumet.

In the midst of pain, grief, shock and anger, it is hard to picture anything but the feelings of the moment. We may certainly own those feelings. Even those of

us not directly impacted can feel a loss of security. For some, this latest incident has stirred the memory of another murder that took place in Calumet back in January of 2008. Indeed such moments can for many be so consuming that we become locked in our grief.

As we saw though in the readings of Scripture, our Lord does not hide from us in these moments. He meets us in our grief, with compassion and love.

Such is the compassion that Jesus calls us to have for those we know are hurting, be it physically, emotionally, mentally or even spiritually. It was a compassionate act for Stacey Feiling to stop her car for Janet Piper.

Yes, in the midst of compassionate action Stacey's life was taken from her. And yet, what she did was the right thing.

Compassion is never wrong. God did not fail Stacey Feiling. God did not fail the Piper family. God has not failed Calumet. While we certainly wish that the events of this week never happened or that the outcome of these events would be a happier ending for us and these families in this life, God is present with us in the midst of our suffering.

God's only son experienced the violence that we saw occur in our neighboring community. Christ's death was undeserved and unjust. However remember that God's story never ends in death.

As people of faith it is in such times that we cling to the hope of the resurrection. In each of the Scripture readings for this day, new life emerged in the face of death. New life will emerge from this tragedy even if in this moment we don't know what that will look like.

The new life God gives will leads us to give thanks. In our prayers we ask this day for our Lord to turn mourning into dancing. For he is present among us, in Word and in Sacrament.

Once fed and nourished, let us go forth in compassionate living first, as a way of giving thanks and glory to God and secondly, to celebrate those who demonstrate Christlike compassion. AMEN.