

What If Our Resurrection Has Begun?

Luke 7: 11-17

¹¹Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹²As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. ¹³When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people." ¹⁷This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

Love that song-

There is such longing,
For the "corner of the sky"
Our place in God's creation.
In the great cosmic story.

It's hard to see where this cosmic story is going, isn't it,
At least on this planet,
At least in this moment,

The preacher at our clergy session
Described what a lot of clergy have been experiencing.

*There have been so many unexpected
And worrisome developments,
So many changes and disappointing heartbreaks,
So many unknowns, that have occurred
Over the past few years.
For the last weeks,
There's no end in sight.
We're worn out.
We're worn down*

And we're not sure what to think about the future.

*We're not sure what or who we're becoming
Or if it's a very good thing at all.*

Bingo.

So, and it that's what clergy are feeling
If that's maybe what you are feeling,
What Christians bring
To a whole world that is feeling this way.

Let's see what the founder and perfecter of our faith,
Has to say to us today.

Jesus is in Nain, a town about
About six miles from Nazareth,
And coming toward him is a funeral procession
Of a young man;
The only son of a woman
Who is also a widow.

His death has left her alone,
With no status, no means to support herself.
Her future is so uncertain.
And she is weeping.

I want you just to take that in for a moment,
That weeping.
Hear that in your mind,

Let her stand in for someone suffering now.
Perhaps for you,
Perhaps for a woman, or a man,
Anywhere in the world,
Ukraine, Ulvalde, Afghanistan

We reveal our humanity most plainly
In our weeping.

At every Annual Conference

There is a moment when the bishop is thanked

And this year,

After the person spoke of all that our bishop

Has done this past year,

Even as he lost his father to death.

The bishop, was so moved by the recognition of all

He's been through

He began to weep, and could not stop.

And all those watching, felt something within

We felt with him, we felt for him.

This woman is weeping.

And Luke says, Jesus has compassion for her.

Compassion, translated from the rare Greek term,

splagchnizomai, (splag-ni-zo-mai)

meaning that his intestines were torn up.

Her situation tears him up inside.

Jesus of Nazareth

The incarnate presence of God upon this earth,

Feels her pain so deeply it hurts.

Does this not reveal something:

That God hears our weeping, our longing,

Knows we are worn out, worn down,

Whether we are we are poor widow, or a bishop

Or anyone else.

The Holy Spirit that resided in Jesus' heart

Felt that woman's hurt

And responded with loving power

Jesus touches the funeral bier,

On which the young man's body was placed,
And says,
Young man I say to you, rise!

And the man, sit's up,
Starts talking!
And Jesus, says the scripture,
Gave him to his mother.

And suddenly, says Luke, the people watching were seized with fear,
They'd heard that he healed
But now he'd raised from death,
Which was terrifying and marvelous
And news spread, quickly, everywhere.

And Jesus knows that it's a great risk
To reveal the power that's beyond anything
Human beings on this earth have ever known
That power threatens those who assume
They have control of the people of the earth

But out of love, out of compassion for
Our human condition,
Jesus chooses to tear open the fabric between
Our time and all time.

For while we may think of resurrection
Healing into life, as an event,
Something we want for ourselves and loved ones
Once this mortal coil is shuffled off.

Jesus shows us that resurrection, healing into life
Is the great constant work of God
This ongoing, purposeful, becoming
Underscores all time,
Encompasses everyone
And everything in all creation.

Resurrection is the essence of God's
Love in action.

Jesus of Nazareth
In this simple, astounding story
Shows us the essence of God:
Compassionate
Responsive
And Resurrecting.

And this, now, as Christ's body,
Is our work.

Fr. Greg Boyle works in Los Angeles
With men and woman who have sought
A family and protection in gangs

It is a precarious life, and death comes young.

One young man came to him, saying,
I want to live before I die.
He so wanted to rise,
Not in the next life,
But in this one

Death will come, in its time, to each,
It's deadness in this one we fear.

And Father Boyle gave him work, and a new community,
He made new friends,
He found joy and purpose and peace,
Before, violence ended his life.

But he had lived before he died.

This longing to rise up,
Is, perhaps, God's own longing in us

And our resurrections, God's compassionate response

After Afghanistan returned to Taliban rule,
Young women and girls' lives were severely restricted.
No longer allowed to attend school past just the early grades

I heard a recording of some young women,
Weeping over their loss, their sense of hopelessness.

But the radio documentary continued.
And teachers, women in Afghanistan and around the world
Felt great compassion
And they have set up online schools
And the girls gather in homes of those with internet
And they described what it felt like to learn
French and History and music
Even new dances
You could hear in their voices, such hope!
Even in the midst of uncertainty, they *are becoming*,
Their resurrection is happening.

After worship today, I'll be heading over to Maynard Avenue
United Methodist Church,
It's the last day for that building to be open.
They are selling that property and Summit UMC is selling theirs
And together they are forming a new church
Circle of Hope UMC
In North Linden, a place that needs an
Open, gracious, reconciling presence.
Resurrection is God's Constant work in us,
In all of us, together,
And in each of us,
We will know it's completion only at death,

But for now,
The charge is clear:
We are not to swim in cynicism and despair.

Consider what the Lord has done for you,
What mercies God has shown you,
When a way was made out of now way
When joy returned in the morning,

Lean into it, God can bear the weight of your life
The river of your tears,
Your worries are known, your longings are heard
And if Jesus of Nazareth
Could raise from the dead
Then the Christ that is in
All creation is raising you, too.

Raising Afghanistan, and Ukraine,
And Ulvalde and all those women facing new uncertainties

God is at work, Christ is in the world
And resurrection is happening,
Even there, even here, even now.
Thanks be to God. Amen