

The Reverend Renee L. Fenner  
St. Barnabas Episcopal Church  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/Year C  
June 6, 2010  
Text: Luke 7:11-17

*“Hear our cry, O Lord!”*

*“When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her,  
“Do not weep.”*

The last few days had been long and hard for her as she watched her son struggle to take in air. She had done everything she could for him. She never left his side, speaking softly to him and gently laying cool towels on his forehead hoping to give him some relief from the heat and his fever. The physicians had been called but all told her the same. It will not be long. And it wasn't. She had seen her husband take his last breaths and now her son, her only son had finally taken his. With great care she had prepared his body for burial.

The streets of Nain seemed particularly crowded that day as the funeral procession made its way to the cemetery of rock tombs. The walk was not that far but today it seemed like an endless trek. The sun beamed down brightly upon the mourners and they were all soon drenched as if they had gone through a light rain. Their loud and shrill cries and the sounds of flutes and cymbals echoed loudly for all to hear causing strangers to clamor to their windows to see what was happening. Yet, the widow was oblivious to all the sights and sounds around her. She did not even feel the hands and arms of those who were supporting her as they made their way across a familiar road. She only knew that her heart was broken.

As the procession drew near the gates another much larger crowd was making its way in. There were several men who walked a few steps ahead of it, parting the way for the One who seemed to be the leader and the focus of all their attention. As He drew closer to the opposing crowd his steps slowed to a halt. His were the only eyes that dared to meet hers and immediately he knew her pain. Only He knew the depth of her sobs. He was moved to his very core out of sympathy for this grieving mother. “And he said to her, “Do not weep.”

Do not weep? Do not weep? Who are you to say to me, “Do not weep.”? First my husband and now this? This is my son who lies here dead. He was ALL I had! I have no one else! I have nothing else!

To her surprise and to the surprise of those nearby, the Man called Jesus, approached the bier, the long woven basket which held the young man’s body, and touched it! Never mind that he would now be considered “unclean” according to the custom of his people. One never touched the body of the dead let alone the bed or bier on which they laid. Still, he knew this mother had need of a miracle in her life. And all movement stopped.

Looking upon the still body he said, “Young man, I say to you, rise!” The dead man’s chest slowly began to rise and fall. His body shivered and his eyelids fluttered. His fingers and toes began to move and “the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.”

This morning we heard two remarkable stories that parallel one another. In both instances the dead sons of two widows are restored to life. In the Old Testament we see the mighty hand of God working through a prophet. In the New Testament we see the mighty hand of God manifested in the incarnation of God’s Self in the person of Jesus. In Jesus we are given a further glimpse into the nature of God as Jesus showed compassion, pity, on the widow from Nain. Our God continues to show compassion on all those who suffer today. God sees all our wants and needs.

We may never see the big miracles like this one or like those found in the New Testament but there are smaller miracles that abound each and every day. Every day God’s compassion enters into our upside down crazy world and touches the places that ache the most in our hearts.

There is a song that says: “Why should I feel discouraged? And why should the shadows come? ...His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me.”

God sees the families of those who have lost loved ones due to war, drunk drivers, and acts of violence and terrorism; those who are trying to make ends meet. God holds in God’s arms the families of mine workers and oil rig workers. God has compassion for those who are caring for loved ones living with cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer’s disease, or other illnesses.

God sees the young people who are trying to make decisions for themselves and not given in to peer pressure; who are waiting, hungry for their own “aha” moment; those who are trying to get off the same welfare merry-go-round that binds their parents and perhaps grandparents; those who desperately want to go on to higher education in hopes of making a difference in their lives and in the world despite naysayers and the odds.

God sees those who have lost their homes due to financial difficulties or natural disasters-hurricanes, mud slides, tsunamis. God has compassion on those who may lose their homes and perhaps their livelihoods. Just ask those along the Gulf of Mexico.

God sees the people of the Sudan who are in desperate need of water. God sees the people of Iraq and Israel. God holds in God’s arms the people of Bangladesh.

God sees those who are depressed or discouraged; hungry or oppressed, the poor and the neglected, the homeless, the lonely, the stressed out, those who mourn, and the widowed and the orphan. God sees you and me where we are.

*“God’s compassion reaches into our lives to hear, touch, and stand in the chaos of life, helping us to find new meaning even in the greatest tragedy, Jesus can hear the cries hidden in the deepest crevices of our despair, just as he heard the heart of the grieving widow. He touches us in the place of our greatest pain, just as he reached into the place of death upon the funeral bier. Jesus steps into the chaos of our unpredictable, overturned, or shattered world to bring meaning from even the most desolate suffering.”\**

Just as Jesus extended compassion and mercy to the widow of Nain by seeing and knowing her need that day, so does our God-yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

And for that we give God glory! Amen.

\* taken from M. Jan Holton’s Pastoral Perspective for Proper 5 in *Feasting on the Word*. Edited by David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor.