

## "The mercy of God" Luke 7:11-17 Trinity 16 2021

Grace and peace in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We find parallel stories in our gospel and Old Testament lesson (1 Kings 17: 17-24). Both accounts speak of God's power over life and death. In Sunday school and confirmation class, we talk about miracles as the suspension of natural laws that God ordained. God created heaven and earth, a well-ordered universe. We can trust that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Normally we can observe natural laws and therefore live in harmony with nature. However, God has the power to suspend His own decrees, even the decree that man dies once and never returns to this world.

But we can trust that God always uses His immense power to show mercy. The Old Testament reading continues the story of Elijah and the widow of Sarepta. In a season of drought and food shortages. Elijah came to the widow to share her food and shelter according to the will of God. God did not allow the flour and oil in the house of the widow to run out, and it was enough for the widow, her son and Elijah until the rain returned to the land. This was a miracle.

The second miracle happened in this way: <sup>17</sup>After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. <sup>18</sup>And she said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!" <sup>19</sup>And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. <sup>20</sup>And he cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?" <sup>21</sup>Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this

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child's life come into him again." <sup>22</sup>And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. <sup>23</sup>And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives." <sup>24</sup>And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

In his mercy, God restored life to the dead boy. Let's see what happened in our gospel:

<sup>11</sup>Soon afterward [Jesus] went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. <sup>12</sup>As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. <sup>13</sup>And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." <sup>14</sup>Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." <sup>15</sup>And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. <sup>16</sup>Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" <sup>17</sup>And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country."

In both stories, God restored the lives of the children of widows. At the time of Jesus, as in the time of the prophet Elijah, it was the custom of the eldest son to take responsibility to care of his mother if his father died. Without other family, a widow had no other support in her old age, so to lose her only child was a disaster for her. Therefore, God in mercy gave the sons another chance to live and support their mothers.

Many times today people ask, Why God does not perform miracles as was done in the Scriptures. God is still almighty and merciful too. In His wisdom, God often does not abrogate the natural laws, but uses

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doctors with their science to heal the sick. In Scripture, God uses His supernatural power for mercy, but also to affirm the words of prophets and apostles. "And the woman said to Elijah, Now I know that thou art a man of God and that the word of the Lord is true in your mouth." Also in our Gospel: "And all were afraid, and glorified God, saying, A great prophet has arisen among us; and God has visited his people. "

However, Jesus was not only a prophet, He is the Savior of the world. After the restoration of the son of the widow of Nain, the daughter of Jairus, and Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha of Bethany, He performed a greater miracle than the restoration of earthly life for a while. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and His resurrection on the third day conquered death, sin and the devil's power forever. We await our resurrections on the last day. Not for a while, but forever.

The second coming of Jesus Christ in glory is the only prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled. On that day we will be resurrected to be with Christ. We do not need other signs of this promise apart from the new birth in Baptism and the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. God has the power to heal the sick and sometimes someone can regain their health in a way that nobody can explain, except as the answer of prayer. However, our faith and hope does not depend on this kind of thing, only in the blood of Christ and the promise of eternal life. Amen.