

Sermon Transcript for September 19, 2021

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

If you paid any attention to that hymn, "Be Still My Soul", the hymn does not say be still my soul because everything is going to work out and everything's going to be okay. It says be still my soul because even though you may be facing sorrow and heartache, even though in this world there will be trouble, take heart. He has overcome the world. The whole concept, and I love this whole section of hope and comfort in the hymnal. There's a big section of it, which contains "What God Ordains Is Always Good", that we sang last week, as well. Both of them and many of the others within this section do offer us the hope and the confidence that God is with us and that He will never leave us nor forsake us, that He will protect us and He will give us all that we need.

However, it also makes it very clear that we are not going to have an easy life in this world, because there is sin in this world and we are still affected by that sin, either personal or corporate, or just the fact that the world is suffering and decaying and degrading. We're going to deal with pain, sorrow, and death. But we know what comes on the other end of things. We know that this is not the end, and that is why we can say, "Be still my soul, because God is with us".

Now in the Gospel lesson, Jesus is going to Nain, which is still up in that northern Sea of Galilee area. He's still on His journey. He's moving forward, He's moving towards Jerusalem, but it's taking Him a while to get there. There's a lot of teaching and things that go on in the meantime. This immediately, or at least soon afterwards, follows the event of the ten lepers that we'd spoke of last week.

So Jesus is going along, and there's a great crowd following after Him and they come to the city of Nain and there's a great crowd following another group of people. And this is a widow and her son who has died. And so there are two crowds, the one that's following Jesus and the one that's mourning the death of the son. They end up coming together and it's not that Jesus was aiming for this, but He comes upon it. And as soon as He sees... And this is a theme that you'll find in Luke a lot, that Jesus sees those who maybe do not deserve to be seen, or He sees those that others look away from. He sees the lepers when they cry to Him... And He sees this woman's sorrow and pain, and He has compassion upon her. And He says to her, "Do not weep." Now in the English, we don't really have the same quality that the Greek does. This isn't just Jesus saying, "Stop it, just stop," but it's like, "Do not continue to weep." The idea is that weeping is okay. It's a normal part of life, but you don't need to continue to weep anymore. It's not just a "stop", like you're doing something wrong here. That's not the concept that we get from Jesus. It is right for us to weep and to mourn because death is not natural. It is a result of sin; it is a result of our rebellion to God, and it is a result of the pain and the punishment that comes from that rebellion. We were designed to be eternal. We were designed to have body and soul together for all eternity and sin ripped that apart and caused us to be separated from our bodies and souls for a time and that is rightfully to be mourned.

But with the presence of Jesus, He is saying to us, "Do not continue to mourn because I am with you." Now He doesn't say that exactly, but in essence, that's what is going on. "I am here, therefore your weeping can cease." Because our hope, her hope, everybody's hope of eternal life is found only and solely in Jesus Christ.

Now in the Old Testament lesson, we have a very obvious parallel. The prophet Elijah, and again, this event follows immediately after, or soon after, the events of last week where he sees this woman who was preparing a little bit of cake for her son and herself so that they may die. And Elijah comes and says, "Don't

worry, your jar of oil will remain full and your flour will remain full until the drought is over." So somewhere in between the years, when the drought is over, the son gets sick and dies, and you can just imagine the widow going, "I was prepared for him to die back then because we didn't have anything, and then you interject and give us hope, and then somewhere in the middle of this hope, then you dash it again and the son dies. I mean, it's almost worse." And so you almost hear a bit of desperation in Elijah, like, "Oh, please, please give this child life." He prays over the child. And he prays desperately to God, and we hear mourning in his voice as he prays for the life of this child. He prays three times, and God restores the son. And then the woman says, "Now I know that you are a prophet of God." Interesting, the miraculous filling of the flour and the oil wasn't enough to convince her that this was a man of God. "Now, now I know."

But then again, think of our own lives. How many times have we been shown the power and majesty of God? How many times have we seen God working in our lives, maybe not miraculously, like filling a jar with oil that should have been empty, but times when things happen that we know were designed by God, because that's the only way it could've worked out. Situations where we have no hope whatsoever and yet somehow God brings us through. And yet how often do we have to go back, "Oh now, now I know that you are really God. I was supposed to know it then, and I should have known it, but now I know." Of course, a couple of weeks later, we're going to say the same thing again. Oh. You know, because if we're worrying and doubting and fretting and if we're anxious about anything, like what we talked about last week it means what we're saying is, "I don't really know that you're God and I don't really trust You."

So every time we worry, we're basically saying, "Oh, I forgot that you really are God and that you can take care of me. Thank you for reminding me again that you are God and You can take care of me. I'm going to need it again next week so I'll be waiting." But the whole idea is, it's very easy for us to forget that God has our back and that all that He ordains is always good. Now it might've been hard for the woman to hear all the God ordained, though, is good. "My son is dead". It's hard to know where the good is in that. Unless of course, we look to what we are called to be. We are called to be eternal and to live is Christ, but to die is gain. Now, that's not a big comfort immediately following a death, it hurts. And it's not going to stop you from mourning. But eventually the comfort will come in knowing that our loved ones are with Christ.

So here we have Jesus coming in with this crowd and the two crowds kind of blend together and He sees the widow. And He has compassion on her and He says, "Stop weeping. You can stop now. Everything will be better." And He came and touched the bier. That's interesting. He touches the bier. That means He touches where the man, the dead man is, which means He has become unclean. Now, the bearers who were carrying him to the grave became unclean and the mother, of course, who prepared him for burial were also unclean, but Jesus had no need to become unclean. Now again, being unclean is under the law. It is not a means of a loss of salvation or a loss of faith. It just is a fulfillment of the law. You have touched something that is dead and the son was dead, so therefore now you are unclean and you need to be restored.

Jesus voluntarily becomes unclean because of the compassion that He had upon this woman. I mean, it's very clear that He also, coming to this earth, in essence became unclean, taking upon the sin of all of humanity. Not because He had to, but because He had compassion upon us. Jesus willingly took the uncleanness upon Himself so that He might restore it and not just make Himself clean, but to cleanse all of us, all of us from our sin and unrighteousness. So He touched the bier and the bearers stood still because their work is done. Their job was getting him to the burial site, but now Jesus has come. They don't need to do anymore. They no

longer need to carry the dead because Jesus is here. We don't need to carry our own dead because Christ carries them for us.

Now, the next thing is interesting. This is something you see no one else in the entire world doing and one of the reasons why maybe some people think that Jesus was a little bit crazy. He speaks to dead people. Jesus is the only one that speaks to dead people. Elijah didn't speak to the widow's son. He spoke to God. Everybody else asking for things to take place, we don't, we can't speak to the storm or the sun or the moon or the grass or anything like that, or the dead person and say, "Do this." We can ask God, "Please work in this and through this," but only Jesus can speak directly to dead people.

Now, as I was going through and studying things, it mentions also one of the other times where Jesus raises somebody from the dead and that is Lazarus. You know, when Lazarus was in the tomb for three days, four days even, Jesus comes and He says, "Lazarus, come out." And the commentator said, Jesus had to mention Lazarus by name, otherwise everybody in the tombs would have come out, because they would recognize the voice of the Master, because He has the authority over death. So He focused it on Lazarus alone, because that was the point of that one miracle. But the idea is the dead recognize the Lord, the Word of God they know.

So from the readings, we know there's life after death. So Jesus says to this young man, "Rise," and He restores the young man to his mother and the people come and they look and they see what has happened and the entire crowd, both the ones that are following Him and the ones that were following after the dead, after the burial procession, and fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us and God has visited His people." Now think about that. It's got fear and glory and God all in the same sentence. And we need to think about the fear of God and think about this, we'd all love to see God show up. We'd love to see the miracles, love to see God's presence in a tangible form and yet the reality of it is, He is the One who has all power over creation and has the power over death. So it is not just the fear of God we need to recognize. We do need to understand the power and majesty of God so that we properly fear Him, but He never lets us stay there because He always shows His love to us.

So God shows up, and what does He do? He forgives us all our sins and gives us eternal life and we thank God and we praise Him and we love Him for the knowledge that He has given to us, for the Spirit that is within us, that tells us, that gives us an assurance that even though we die, yet we shall live. And so yes, the fear of death and the fear of One who has power over death is right, but that same God has also promised to raise us all from the dead, to forgive us all of our sins, to cleanse us, us who are unclean because of sin. And He will bring us to His kingdom, to live for all eternity. God has visited His people. I mean, that's what the people are proclaiming and they're exclaiming. That is the crux, the center of our victory. The center of human life is that Christ came to dwell among His people, not to judge us, but to be judged so that He could pronounce us clean and not guilty.

So no matter what sorrows we may face, even if they be death itself, we know that we can be still and know that He is God. We know that whatever God ordains is always good. And we know that He will be with us and we need not fear because the fear of God leads to His love and to His grace and to His mercy.

May that grace, mercy and peace be and abide with you always now and forevermore unto life everlasting.
Amen.