

Sermon Transcript

October 2, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Be still my soul. The Lord is on your side. I think that message resonates at all times, but especially in this time of hardship, especially after the storm has passed and we felt the roaring winds and we felt the rain and we saw all the damage that was done. Fortunately, not much in our area, but we've seen some of the damage that is done in other places. It's a very important message for us to remember, be still my soul, the Lord is at your side. This is true for us no matter what obstacles we face.

When last week we talked about how God provides for us all that we need to support this body in life and that there are times when we face trials and tribulations, we are not Pollyanna about this. We're not saying, "Well, if you believe in God, everything will be going nice and you'll never have any problems ever again." That's not what the Christian faith says. We are very clear, we will still suffer in this world because this world is still filled with sin. It is still corrupted by sin. There is disease, there's famine, there is storm, there is war. There's interpersonal conflict and struggle. There's our own sinful nature that seeks to bear its ugly head every day and drag us away from the comfort and the peace that we have in Christ Jesus. We understand these things to be real. We know that without the presence of Christ, we are dead in our sins and trespasses. We know all this to be true, and yet our soul can be still at rest because God is by our side.

The story that we're reading today in Luke has a juxtaposition of a crowd coming out, mourning the loss of a dead young man and a crowd following Jesus, looking forward to His life and His miracles. What they don't know is He's actually heading towards His own death. So we have a son who is dead and we have a Son who is heading towards His own death, and it is because of the death of Jesus that he has the right and the ability to stand before, to stop this funeral buyer from going by, to touch a dead man, to make Himself unclean. Because He is going to raise that young man from the dead. Because He Himself is going to take death upon Himself and conquer it on the cross. So, once He dies on the cross, He has mastery over life and death.

So therefore, as a precursor, as a hint of what He's about to do, He stops this funeral from taking place. He puts His hand on the young man and He tells him to sit up and he does. The dead man comes alive. I mean this is absolutely amazing and it's interesting. Fear seized the people. We all talk about what a wonderful thing it would be to see the miracles of Jesus. And we all imagined what amazing thing it would be to see miracles happen in our own lives, something dramatic like this.

Now, what we don't realize is there's a whole lot of miracles going on every single day that we don't even recognize. They don't seem as spectacular as raising somebody from the dead, but they're still there nonetheless. But this, imagine if we had a funeral and the body is in the casket and we're about ready to do our funeral service and we're singing a hymn, and suddenly that body just sits up in the coffin. And starts talking to us. Now we would praise God, but there would be a lot of fear in there that's like, what just happened?

The fear of the Lord is a real thing. He has power over life and death. It is right to fear the Lord. It is a good and proper response to fear the Lord, but that fear does not lead us to run away from God or to hate our God because we understand the other part of the nature of God, the main part of the nature of God. What He shows when He sees this woman walking out with her dead son, Jesus has compassion on her. That is how He responds to us. Even though He has the right and the authority to condemn sin, He has compassion because He loves us. He sees us as so valuable that He is willing to sacrifice Himself so that we might have the hope of everlasting life. So that we might know in our trials and tribulations in this world the breadth and the length and the heights and the depth of the knowledge of the love of God in our lives.

People suffer all sorts of things in this world. And there are two things, two responses that I think are necessary when we deal with suffering. One is to remember that in suffering we learn how compassionate our God is in our hardship. I guarantee you, each and every one of us that has gone through trials and tribulations in our life, when we have looked to our Lord for our comfort and our hope, we have found this strength to make it through every trial that we have faced. And at the end of it, we have realized how strong our God is and how able He is to provide for us in times of trouble.

When things are going well, when everything is smooth sailing, it's easy not to remember to thank God for everything that He has given to us. It's easy to forget how much we owe Him. It's easy to stop fearing Him and loving Him because everything's going smooth. We don't really feel like we need Him when everything's going well or at least we don't remember it. It's when things are tough, when we realize how much of our lives are dependent upon His grace and mercy, and so we can look at our trials and tribulations as a blessing from God. Because in those times we find out how strong He is and how much compassion He has and how much love He has for us.

And the second thought is how does He show that compassion and love? He speaks through his word, the words that His love never fails, that He is with us always to the very end of the age, but He also has given you and me hands and feet to be used to give the compassion of God to others. He has given us the ability to be the representatives of God in this world. So we see times of trial as opportunities for us to be ambassadors for Christ. We get an opportunity to be very clear about the good works that He has prepared beforehand for us to do. It's very easy to see what needs to be done when there is tribulation in trial in somebody's life, we come and walk alongside them. We pray for them, we provide for them. Sometimes we just sit with them. But we have the opportunity to be God's representative in times of suffering.

This hurricane was pretty devastating, there's no question about that. But this is a great opportunity for us to be able to show what it means to be children of God. What it means to be children who are confident that whether we live or die, Christ is with us. No matter what happens in this world, we are at peace because we know that like this young man, we also will rise from the dead. Not in this life necessarily, but in the life to come. Which is going to be so much better than the here and the now. We are given the opportunity to demonstrate our confidence in the love of Christ when the trials and tribulations hit us. Be still my soul, be at rest because God is with us no matter what we face, no matter what trials and tribulations come our way, know this. God has compassion. That is his first thought towards you.

And whatever you ask, whatever you need, you can be confident of this. He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. In our hymn, it talked about God guiding and directing the future as He has guided and directed the past. We can look at our own personal lives and see how God has guided us through our lives. We can look throughout history and see how God has guided history to bring about the most important event in history, His Son Jesus Christ, death in the cross.

If He can work through the history of mankind to bring about the perfect conditions for His son to come, if He has been with us each and every step of our way, we can be confident that He will be with us all the rest of the steps of our way. And we can know that come hurricane or flooding or disease or whatever else may come, our soul can be at rest because God is by our side and has compassion on you and on me, and on the whole world. May that grace, mercy, and peace and compassion be and abide with you always, now and forevermore unto life everlasting. Amen.