

Second Sunday After Pentecost, Year C

June 6, 2010

1 Kings 17: 17-24, Psalm 30, Galatians 1: 11-24, Luke 7: 11-17

### **1 Kings 17: 17-24**

<sup>17</sup>After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. <sup>18</sup>She then 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>But he said to her, "Give me your son." He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. <sup>20</sup>He cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" <sup>21</sup>Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, let this child's life come into him again." <sup>22</sup>The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. <sup>23</sup>Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." <sup>24</sup>So 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."

### **Psalm 30**

<sup>1</sup>I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me.

<sup>2</sup>O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

<sup>3</sup>O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

<sup>4</sup>Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.

<sup>5</sup>For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

<sup>6</sup>As for me, I said in my prosperity, "I shall never be moved."

<sup>7</sup>By your favor, O Lord, you had established me as a strong mountain; you hid your face; I was dismayed.

<sup>8</sup>To you, O Lord, I cried, and to the Lord I made supplication:

<sup>9</sup>"What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?"

<sup>10</sup>Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me! O Lord, be my helper!"

<sup>11</sup>You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,

<sup>12</sup>so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

### **Galatians 1: 11-24**

<sup>11</sup>For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin;

<sup>12</sup>for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

<sup>13</sup>You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.

<sup>15</sup>But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the

Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, <sup>17</sup>nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. <sup>18</sup>Then after three years I

did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; <sup>19</sup>but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup>In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! <sup>21</sup>Then I went into the regions of

Syria and Cilicia, <sup>22</sup>and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; <sup>23</sup>they only heard it said, "The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup>And they glorified God because of me.

### **Luke 7: 11-17**

<sup>11</sup>Soon afterwards [Jesus] went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. <sup>12</sup>As 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. <sup>13</sup>When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep."

<sup>14</sup>Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" <sup>15</sup>The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his

mother. <sup>16</sup>Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God

has looked favorably on his people!”<sup>17</sup> This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

I believe I may have mentioned this story before, but if I can’t recall, then hopefully neither can you.

Years ago, I was very active in issues involving social justice as well as homelessness in New York City. I recall hearing a speaker describe what was for her a life-changing event. Like the majority of New Yorkers, she was doing her best to carve out a little slice of life within that wonderful and bustling city. She must have been doing well enough to actually be able to afford to live in Manhattan.

Those of you who are familiar with New York City, or any larger city for that matter, know that it is crowded, fast paced, and filled with every possible sight, sound, and smell imaginable. Eventually, if you live there long enough, most of that becomes “normal”.

I don’t know if things have changed for the better in recent years, but during the 1970s through early 1990s homeless people were *very* visible in NYC (as well as in Washington, DC, where I lived for a few years). Most of the residents did their best to ignore, avoid, or even blame these individuals for their circumstances, but little was done to effectively assist them. Many, myself included, simply stopped “seeing” these people; they became “part of the landscape”. We got used to it. That was just the way things were.

That speaker’s life changed when, one day, she realized, to her horror, that she was, literally, stepping over a human being in order to go into and out of her apartment. From that point on, she became a full time advocate to end homelessness.

Here a few more familiar stories.

A young monk and priest suddenly becomes aware of how his own Church was keeping people in fear, shame, and uncertainty. He decided, in the name of the Gospel, to do something about it. (That, by the way, was Martin Luther)

A young African American woman named Rosa Parks, tired after a long day of work, suddenly realized that she had as much right to any seat on the bus as any white person. She decided to do something about it.

A young and very well educated minister named Martin Luther King, Jr., who could have had a pretty “cushy” job, became aware of the evils of racism and segregation in society. He decided to do something about it.

What do these stories have to do with today's readings?

We get so used to suffering and death (in one form or another), or so overwhelmed by it, or so frightened by it, or so accustomed to it, that it becomes essentially invisible to us or we feel powerless to do anything that might make a real difference.

In our first reading, neither the mother nor Elijah accepted that senseless death and suffering death had the final word. In the Gospel story, I imagine that Jesus and His followers, like almost everyone else, could just as easily have passed by that sad funeral procession. After all, people, especially children, died all the time back then, as is still the case in some parts of the world today. Funerals were a daily and familiar sight. Just part of the "woodwork". The reading appears to indicate that Jesus' followers were going to do just that, but Jesus didn't.

I have to admit that I have a really difficult time relating to stories about the raising of the dead. It simply is not part of my experience nor of the people I know. So, for me, the real miracle here is that both Elijah and Jesus actually *saw* the suffering of others and decided to do something about it. They did not accept the "death" that so many of us take for granted.

May God continue to open our eyes and hearts so that we not be blind to suffering and injustice. May God empower us to see the world as God sees it and not to simply pass by.

Here's a second message. What in our lives appears to be beyond hope? Can we see signs of new possibilities? Where is God and what do we hear God "saying"? One commentary I consulted wisely pointed out that Jesus was neither invited nor expected; yet He "showed up" anyway.

Finally, despite the real pain and sadness of these stories, both still ended with a "happily ever after" quality. Things worked out. Most of us do not tend to be that fortunate. So, another real miracle is when our hope and faith continue even in the midst of things we don't understand and when things don't appear to have any happy ending.

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. I want to see you.

AMEN.