

Sermon: 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 7:11-17 – Jesus raises a widow’s son

Theme: The Resurrection of the Body

Goal: To assure hope in the living Christ for those who mourn

Dear Friends in the Living Christ,

Introduction: Two processions met at the entrance of the town of Nain. There is a big *contrast of the two processions: The one entering the city no doubt is happy and filled with hope because Jesus is in its midst; the one leaving the city is sad and without hope since it is a funeral procession. The focal point of the one group is Jesus, the source of life; the focal point of the other is death as represented by the corpse.* (Series C p 171). - Which procession are you following? Are you walking hopeless, sad, with your eyes looking down, fixed only on problems, sicknesses, and death of this world? Or are you walking with your eyes lifted up, fixed on the living Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life?

Unfortunately, the day comes for each of us when we have to follow a procession carrying one of our beloved ones to the grave. And the day will come when we ourselves will be carried by our beloved mourning behind our coffin. Why does it have to be this sad way? Is there any hope? Does Jesus still come to meet our funeral procession, as He did at Nain, to say to us as well: “Don’t cry?”, because He has a word of hope for us?

I – Death

Death wasn’t part of the original plan of God for humankind. Man was created to live forever. But Adam and Eve didn’t obey the commandment of God, who had said: “You must not eat from the

tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will die" (Genesis 2:17). The Apostle Paul states: "...sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). And he adds: "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

There is no escape. We all have to pass through this sad experience. Even the Son of God had to face death, and death on the cross! Not that He deserved it, because He didn't have sin; but because He was carrying our sins, and He had to pay for them. "The last enemy to be destroyed is death", says Paul in the big chapter about the Resurrection of the Body, 1 Corinthians 15. And this gives us a new perspective about death: There is life after death!

II – Life

The procession of Life was entering the town of Nain when it faced the procession of death. It was not only a contrast, but a confrontation as well. Jesus didn't give way to the funeral procession. He touched the coffin and "those carrying it stood still". Jesus was deeply touched by the suffering of the widow, who had lost her only son. His heart went out to her and He acted. - First, He said to the widow: "Don't cry." – But, how can someone not cry at the loss of a son, the only son? – Paul writes: "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you...to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). We cry, but not without hope. – Second, "Jesus said: Young man, I say to you, get up! The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother." – The encounter with Jesus gives solution to matters that are insoluble to man.

The resurrection of this young man was an anticipation of what will happen to all humankind at the end of the times: The resurrection of

the body. This is not the only record of a resurrection we have in the Bible. The Old Testament reading showed us when Elijah brought a son of a widow in Zarephath, (actually Lebanon), to life again (1 Kings 17:17-24). Jesus raised from the death the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:41-56), and Lazarus as well (John 11). And Jesus Himself was raised from the dead by God the Father, as Paul testifies so boldly at the beginning of the Epistle for today (Galatians 1:1) and also in 1 Corinthians 15:20-22: “Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” – There is life and hope in the Living Christ!

III – Hope

We confess in the Apostles’ Creed: *I believe in the resurrection of the body.* In the same way as we believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, we also believe that all the dead will rise at the end of the days. Let me quote some of the most important Bible Verses on this matter: - The Patriarch Job (19:25-27) confesses: “I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” - Paul writes: “So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power” (1 Corinthians 15:42-43). – God said to Prophet Daniel (12:2): “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” – And Jesus assures: “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and

those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28-29).

Conclusion: We, through God’s grace, have the advantage of hindsight afforded by Good Friday and Easter, where we have death and life in Christ, the first one who rose from the dead for everlasting life. Death, our final enemy, pertains to the realm of darkness. Jesus, who came to proclaim and exhibit the kingdom of God, performed this miracle of the resurrection of the son of the widow in Nain as an indication of the final destiny God intends for all Christians (Series C 173).

As we have still to face the procession of death, let us face it with Jesus; let us believe and hope in the Living Christ, who promised that in the New Heaven and in the New Earth God “will wipe every tear from our eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Revelation 21:4). Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 05 June 2016