

2 PENTECOST (LECTIONARY 10) JUNE 6, 2010 CYCLE "C"

TITLE: THE WORD OF THE LORD IN YOUR MOUTH IS TRUTH.

READINGS: 1Kings 17:17-24, Ps. 30, Gal. 1:11-24, Luke 7:11-17

Do you ever get a case of the blahs? Ever get "Down in the dumps?" Days when you are depressed, discouraged, or just plain disgusted with life? But there are days when you have the right to feel low, to feel down. Life is like that. Life is like a sail boat. When the wind blows, one side of the boat is up and the other is down perilously close to the water. But when the sail boat turns around, the down side becomes the up side and vice versa. Only when the wind dies down does the boat remain on an even keel. So it was with two widow women we see today, one in our first reading, and one in today's Gospel.

Wait a minute, Pastor, you say, you just talked about the widow of Nain last Sunday. Yes, I did. But I would like to give you a little different perspective and besides some of you, and I won't name names, weren't here last Sunday.

In our first account from 1Kings, we experience the wonderful story of Elijah. He lived during the Kingship of Ahab, whose queen was the infamous Jezebel, who had brought Baal worship and a raft of the false god's prophets into Israel. King Ahab was totally controlled by the pagan-minded Jezebel, gave in to her wiles, and pretty much sold Israel down the river. In our reading today, Elijah is in Zarephath near Sidon which is outside of Israel. It was dangerous for him to live within Israel because he was recognized as a prophet of God and, of course, hated and hunted by good old Jezebel. He was living in the home of a widow and her only child, a son. Illness strikes her child until, "There was no breath left in him." He was dead.

Our widow then blames Elijah, "Have you come to convict me of my sins and cause my son to die?" Remember the ancients believed that God punished the children for the parent's sins. Elijah doesn't accept the widow's conclusions, but takes the child in his arms and moves into his

own upper room area of the home. Elijah wanted a place where he could commune with God. So he carries into God's presence not only the body of the child but also the immense grief of the child's mother. It is hard for Elijah to believe that God would strike down the son of the very woman who has fed him and provided a refuge for him from King Ahab. "O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" 1K.17:20. Then three times he calls on God to restore the child's life. And "The Lord listened to the voice of Elijah." Having her child returned to her and in the midst of her overwhelming joy, our widow makes a very profound statement. "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth." 1K.17:24. Here we, too, are to recognize the truth in the Word of God. Then, of course, we are to live it, and in living it, we bring that truth to our world.

Now let us look at our Gospel and the example of our second widow in today's readings. It is uncanny how very similar this story about the widow of Nain is to our first story of the widow of Sidon. The story of the raising of the widow's son of Nain is unique to Luke. This is one of the times that Luke wants to compare Jesus with one of the prophets of old. Jesus performs a miracle as extraordinary as Elijah's raising of the widow's son at Zarephath. "A great prophet has risen among us," the crowd around Jesus shouts, and it emphasizes the Jewish hope that God would one day raise up one who was like the greatest of all the prophets: Moses. But this is precisely the truth Luke wants us to recognize. He is telling us here in this example of giving life that Jesus goes even beyond the prophet Moses. He is more than the prophets of old. Luke designates Jesus as "*Kurios*" Lord. It is that very Greek word that Luke uses in verse 13. "When the Lord (*Kurios*) saw her, he had compassion for her and said, 'Do not weep'". Lk.7:13. Luke is showing us that Jesus is greater than the prophets. He is divine. He is truly our Lord.

Another very important truth Luke wants us to grasp is this one: When the widow's son of Zerephath was given life, Elijah had repeatedly beseeched God to restore the dead young man. "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'" 1K17:21. But Luke in our Gospel account tells us that Jesus simply commands the young man to rise,

performing the extraordinary miracle with the authority of his own word. “Young man, I say to you, rise!” Lk.7:14b. It is not the first time Luke has “joined together” God and Jesus, that is, shown us that Jesus is divine. We see it in Luke’s infancy narrative as well. Luke wants us to be aware that the mission and the person of Jesus and God are irrevocably joined. In the account in 1 Kings we learn the truth that God is Lord over death and here we learn the truth that Jesus, the God-man is Lord over death.

These two widows and their stories are as relevant today as they ever were. Even though we may be down depressed, in the depths, as I mentioned when we began, we know there is hope. We know that if we cling to the word of God, if we seek the truth we can find the Lord, we can find life. It took faith for our two widows too find truth, to find life. It does for us as well.

The great philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once described a familiar boyhood experience. He was being taught to swim by his father. Splashing wildly with both arms and kicking with one leg, he called to his father, “Look at me, look at me. I’m swimming!” But, he said, all the time he was holding on to the bottom of the swimming pool with his big toe.

Many of us are like that in our faith, in our trust, in our acceptance of the truth of the Word of God, in our abandonment to Christ. One toe remains on the bottom! It is an enormous step for some of us to abandon our fears and simply trust God. Our two widows did it. Now it’s up to us to make the Word of the Lord in our mouths the truth and live it in our world.
Amen.

Pastor Barney