

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Imagine attending a funeral and on the way to the burial site, the person that everyone is mourning suddenly is raised from the dead. How would we feel? My guess is that we'd probably be shocked and afraid.

In today's gospel lesson from Luke, this is the situation that the crowds and the mother of the deceased experienced. Jesus, the disciples, and a large crowd were on their way to Nain, a city that is thought to have been southeast of Nazareth. As they came near the town gate they saw a funeral procession. The man, who died, was a widow's only son. This poor woman had no family, no one to support her the rest of her life. Jesus felt sorry for her and told her not to weep. He touched the stretcher where her son laid and then raised her son from the dead by saying, "Young man, I say to you, rise!"

The young man was raised from the dead. He sat up and began talking and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

Following Jesus' act of compassion towards the mother of her only child, the crowds reacted in fear. They didn't know what to think. This man that they were weeping over was now alive and well. They were overwhelmed, probably with a variety of different emotions. In their fear of what they experienced, the crowds praised God by proclaiming that a great prophet had risen among them. Then, the word about what Jesus had done spread throughout Judea.

This text creates a variety of images. Picture Jesus, the disciples, and the large crowd approaching the funeral procession. They stop. Jesus raises the dead man. Jesus gave new life to this man. The reaction of the crowd being fear may be what we expect, but it demonstrates to us the life changing moment for them.

Jesus gave life. Two different groups collided together. One group that brought death and the other brought life. How amazing is it to think that these two groups came together. Jesus turned the tables. He turned mourning into rejoicing. The story spread. It was shared between many people. John the Baptist later proclaimed that Jesus could raise the dead.

What does this mean for us? We, too have new life in Jesus. Jesus gave us life...he gave us eternal life because he loved us so much that he gave his life and was raised from the dead three days later. Today, Jesus still sees groups colliding together. These groups may be as simple as people who have heard the story of Jesus – from the miracles that he performed, to his death, resurrection, and ascension from people who have not heard.

What reactions do we have knowing that Jesus gives us eternal life? Are we fearful of what God has done for us? Do we worship and praise God for this gift of life? Do we share the story of the miracles that Jesus' performed? Do we tell the Easter story to those who have heard it and also those who haven't? What do we tell our children,

grandchildren, nieces, and nephews? What do we share with our friends and the un-churched? Are we bold in living our lives for the glory of God?

At Synod Assembly this week, there was a lot of discussion about reaching un-churched people and making this church more diverse. As I sat and listened to the discussion, I couldn't help but think of why this is difficult for the ELCA. Maybe it's fear. It may be hard to share faith with people we don't know. Maybe it's because new people bring new ideas and change is hard. Bishop Hanson's comment about reaching the un-churched that will stay with me was to invite friends to worship and to share the story with them. Relationships seem to be key in making disciples. Who would you invite to Sunday school, worship, and other events at Saint Nicholas? Who would you share the gospel with?

The crowds reacted in fear and they praised God when Jesus raised the Widow's son at Nain. How do we react? How do we live our life knowing what God has done for us through Jesus?

Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.