

SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER¹
The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity²

Lessons:³

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the eighth Verse of the seventeenth Chapter of the First Book of the Kings, commonly called the Third Book of the Kings.⁴

“And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath [**ZARR-ih-fath**], which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee....

“And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth.

“And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the eleventh Verse of the seventh Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke.⁵

“And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Text:

From the Second Lesson: “And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.”⁶ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Homily:

In our times, we have become desensitized to the many horrors that we see. Death and grief is common entertainment that is used by the media to obtain ratings. Good ratings mean more commercial sponsors. More sponsors mean more money. The more tragic the story, the better. We seem to have lost our compassion and sense of decency when human lives are tragically destroyed. For the people and the families of these trage-

dies, the grief is unbearable. While they are going through unspeakable sorrow, while we simply change the channel.

While all of this is fact, the greatest death is that of our compassion. It is our greatest loss. But what is it that takes its place? Remember that when something is taken away, something else moves right in to take its place. Where there is compassion, there is hope. If compassion is lost, cynicism and despair move in. Since we are powerless over all that happens; why even bother with hope or endure other people's sufferings with compassion?

Today's Second Lesson is all about compassion. It is about the compassion that Christ had on the grieving widow and mother. It is about His compassion for the entire world. When our compassion is killed there is no doubt that we ourselves are dead. We are dead to ourselves, to one another and to God. There is no possible way for us to live. We can remedy this, though. We must be alive in Christ Jesus who dwells in us and we in Him.

“When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her.” There was no changing of the channel or looking away. He showed compassion for her grief and despair. She had lost everything. She is described as a Widow, so first, she lost her husband. Now she has lost her only son. Imagine just for a minute that inconsolable grief; the incomprehensible despair that this woman must have felt.

Compassion is a word that seems to be tossed around like a ball to a dog these days but it is a very strong word. It is not one that should be used lightly in describing things of the media. This word is directly tied to us. It is in the very fabric of life that Christ has woven for us. It is much more than how we feel for or about others. It is not an emotion; something that can be altered.

The compassion shown by Jesus reaches out. It touches and heals all despair and restores and reconciles us to humanity. Out of His compassion, Christ says to the grieving woman's son, "young man, I say unto thee arise." He restores life and hope to the grieving woman. Through compassion, there is hope and hope always wins out over despair. This compassion that He shows is a powerful and life-giving force.

We are assured that Christ has compassion for all of us that hope in Him. We are to be ready and open to the Grace that is bestowed upon us by God. Grace transforms us internally. This Grace shows us that Christ's compassion is an immense love for us. If we live in that love, then we are changed. His love is in us and shapes and moves us closer to Him through our human frailness.

His compassion is not only moving within us, but within the Church, as well. It is the life force within Her that reaches out to all and restores, refreshes and heals. We, as the Church are to reach out to others with this compassion and to bring them to God, through Christ. We as the Church are to do as Christ Jesus commanded the young man of the Gospel. We are to arise and live through His compassion for us.

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The Rev'd George Parrish⁷
September 19, 2010

¹ "Any set of Psalms and Lessons appointed for the evening of any day may be read at the morning service, and any set of morning Psalms and Lessons may be read in the evening." *Concerning the Service of the Church*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER viii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

² This sermon was originally written on the Gospel for Mass on the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, 2010.

³ *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxv (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

⁴ I Kings 17:8-9, 17-24 (KJV).

⁵ St. Luke 7:11-17 (KJV).

⁶ St. Luke 7:13 (KJV).

⁷ Priest, The Diocese of New Orleans, The Anglican Catholic Church.