**10th Sunday of Ordinary Time – Cycle C**

June 8/9, 2013

**1Kings 17: 17-24; Gal 1: 11-19; Lk 7: 11-17**

We have this wonderful first reading today about the great prophet Elijah who was staying in a woman’s house whose son was really sick and eventually dies. The woman, as was the custom of the time, thought her son’s death was punishment for her sins, and she was deathly afraid because she was dependent on her son to provide for her in her old age. Without a son or a husband, she would be reduced to begging. Elijah, seeing this and knowing this, had compassion for her, interceded for her, and he brought her son back to life, giving him back to his mother.

Then in our Gospel we have two great crowds of people approaching each other. The first is the funeral crowd. They are processing out of the city, wailing and lamenting the death of the young man and aware of the hard fate that awaited his mother for she too would be left begging for food and money since she had no son or husband to provide for her.

The second is a large crowd that is following Jesus and going toward the city. They aren’t lamenting or mourning. They are excited, but confused. “Who is this Jesus? What might he mean for us? Let’s follow him a while and see what happens,” they are thinking to themselves. They are excited because they have heard Jesus say a lot of things and may have even seen a miracle or two performed. So, they are following him to see what happens next, but they aren’t sure what to make of him.

The two crowds meet one another, what happens? What does Jesus do? Jesus walks up to the funeral procession. He has compassion on the woman, and he raises the young man up, gives him life, and he gives him back to his mother.

What do we learn from these readings today? We learn that both Elijah and Jesus had compassion for women by giving life to their sons. We learn that both were moved to pity for widows.

We learn that compassion is life-giving, not life-taking. We learn that to be compassionate to others is to renew their lives, and give them hope.

Yes, Jesus pities the woman and resurrects a young man! He commands life and death! Yes, the people rejoice, but they are divided in their opinions about him. They think, “He did what Elijah did. Has Elijah returned from the dead? Is Jesus a prophet and a miracle worker? Or is he God?”

Some concluded, as the Gospel tells us, “A great prophet has arisen in our midst!” Others said, “God had visited his people!”

Are not these the same questions people ask today? Are these not the same conclusions people conclude about him even now?

Who do you say Jesus is? Who, really, if you look at your heart, if you look at how you live your lives, are you saying he is? Be careful how you answer because it has implications for your life.

What do you think? Is Jesus about dying or about living? Is he about condemnation, as the widow in the first reading feared, or is he about compassion?

If you say Jesus is a great prophet and a holy man who taught many good things, and that is all he is, if you say that either with words or by the way you live your life, well, then, his words are just human words. If he is just a prophet, then what he said pertained to his people 2000 years ago, not necessarily to us in 2013.

On the other hand, if you say Jesus is God, then his words are eternal and always can be applied, for all times and places, and in every aspect of our lives right here and now.

Many in our world today want to “massage” the words of Jesus to make them mean what they want them to mean. Many today really do see Jesus as just a great man and a prophet. So they try to manipulate Jesus’ words in order to excuse themselves and their behavior. Many want to take his teachings and make them fit what the common culture teaches, to relativize them you might say, so as to not offend anyone and to be able to live as they want to live our culture and not as God would have us live.

It is true, isn’t it? Our culture today would say that abortion, war, same-sex marriage and euthanasia are all justifiable, and the Bible and the 2000 year history of the Church’s teachings about these matters are not to be thought of as binding on us anymore. Euthanasia: we don’t like to use that word do we, but believe me the elderly are being encouraged in many ways to die rather than to live.

Jesus is a great man, a prophet and a teacher and so what he taught, he did teach to a people 2000 years ago, but he is much more than that. He is the Son of God, so what he said is said to us also!

He is a God of life, not death! He is a God of freedom, not slavery! Our God is not some fussy, competitive god trying to get our attention by binding us up with burdensome obligations and teachings. No! He is a God who frees us – always frees us - from death, from sin, from slavery to the world! Think of what he did for the young man and the woman: He freed them from death and slavery to the world. He relieved them of their burdens. He gave them life! He gave them hope!

We don’t own Jesus. We don’t own the faith. We don’t own grace. We don’t own God’s Word. We cannot manipulate the Word of God who is Jesus Christ. We cannot take what is eternal truth and try to limit it. We must follow it, accept it, and live it if we are to be truly free.

Yes, our God is a God of freedom. If you have a hard time believing that, then I challenge you to live for just three months as Jesus taught us to live and find out for yourselves whether you are freer in the end.

My friends, ask God the big question: “What do you want me to do? How do you want me to live?” We have nothing to fear in asking these questions.

If we ask with an open heart, God will raise us up to new life in abundance! He will give will give us freedom!

Let us now, in this Eucharist, give him thanks for his abundant love!