

Sermon 2010 Pentecost 2
Text: Luke: 7:14-15
Theme: "With Just a Word"
6-6-10 (New Member Sunday)

In the prayer of the day we prayed that God would go before us and after us. That is to say that we pray that God cares for us with respect to our needs. He provides food to eat and air to breathe. He provides us with His Word and Sacrament for the nourishment of our soul. He provides us with peace, knowing that he carries us in the palm of his hand even when...and especially when things are hard for us.

We know all of this to be true because the Bible promises it to us and we have experienced it many times in our lives. The texts for today go a little further, however. Not only do we see that God provides, but we get a glimpse of **how** he provides.

There is nothing more demonstrative of God's ability to care for us than his absolute supremacy over life and death. Whatever your needs are today whether it is something as small as a common cold or something as big as a terminal illness, you can walk away from these texts knowing without a shred of doubt that God can and will walk before you and behind you and there is nothing beyond his power.

These accounts of raising people from the dead are extremely important to us. You see, if God can conquer all – except death – he is not God. In Greek mythology, the gods of human imagination would wring their hands and do their best to save their heroes. Sometimes it worked and

sometimes it did not. Likewise in the post modern world, god is a pleasant idea and a collection of important values but when all is said and done, he has no more to offer than good information.

Do you wonder why the churches are no longer full on Sunday mornings? Just 40 years ago we had 700 people worshipping here every weekend and now we average a little over 200. Why is that? I know it is not because people were better in 1970. I remember 1970 quite well. Every sin I deal with as people come to me during the week was present in 1970 too. Parents struggled to get along with their children. Young ladies turned up pregnant without the benefit of a husband. People drank too much, smoked too much and ate too much. Husbands and wives yelled horrible things at one another and broke their marriage vows left and right just like they do today. And don't point to the divorce rate and say, "but there is so much divorce today." Just because our laws made it terribly difficult to get a divorce never meant there was any less sin. Remember that divorce is not a sin. It is just a legal statement of where sin has done its damage and the sin has destroyed the relationship. The sin happened long before the divorce when we stopped treating one another as dearly loved children of God.

So it is not that people somehow became more sinful in the last 40 years and that's why there are fewer people in worship. It is because the Church stopped believing that it could help. The Church started acting like a support group for terminally ill sinners instead of the fountainhead of Grace that heals sinners. Pastors started saying that they were coaches of the team instead of fathers of the family who stand in the stead of Christ himself

and offer forgiveness to hurting and helpless people. We stopped believing in the power of God.

So the people of the post-modern world came along and said, "Hey, if all you have for me is helpful information for living a better life, I can get that from the Internet. Why would I waste an hour of my life sitting on those ridiculous benches and singing music I don't even understand?" And the churches began to empty out. We tried guiltting them into being here and that worked for a while. We tried every program known to man and that just staved off the inevitable. We tried entertaining them with cool music and videos, and that helped a little but now our bag of tricks is used up. If God can conquer all – except death – he is not God.

But God can conquer death and if he can conquer death, he can do anything! In our Gospel for today, Jesus shows us that not only can God conquer death but that he can do it with nothing more than a Word – **with just a word**. The very Word of Jesus raises that boy from death. That is something all of our medical marvels cannot do. That is something neither Buddha nor Joseph Smith could do! Even Elijah had to lie on the boy and pray three times but Jesus, the son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, our Lord simply says, "Arise" without even touching the boy.

Jesus has more control over life and death than we can imagine. His Word has such power in it that it can reverse all death both physical and spiritual. This is not logical. This is mysterious and it is not something we can analyze and understand. This Word that we read from Scripture has unbridled power. This water that washes over us at Baptism is miraculous in

scope and nature. This body and blood we receive, in, with and under the bread and the wine can heal us physically, mentally and spiritually in ways that are completely beyond our comprehension. It is a mystery folks. It is a miracle. We come to this place week after week and we witness the miraculous and that is what the people of our community do not know. They think we come here for some handy information but we come here to see the gates of heaven opened and angels ascending and descending from the throne of God and bringing to us the mysterious, healing powers of God.

So have confidence in the Word and the Sacraments. Use them like you believe they have the power to raise the dead because they do. These are not wise, pithy, little sayings out of some historic book. These are the powerful tools of God. Handle them as you would a lit stick of dynamite.

Have confidence that it will do what God says it will do. That he will hem you in behind and before and work the miraculous in your life week after week through the power of the tools we have received. AMEN.