

**The man from Nain thought his life was over. Do you ever wonder what it is like to die? I do. I wonder what you think about – especially if you know it is coming. I mean we all know it is coming but we often deny death's reality as though death only happens to an unfortunate few. But today, I want you to think about death. If you knew that you would die today at 5:00 pm, what would you think about? Would you think of all the things you didn't do that you wish you would have? I never took that trip to Europe, or I never fell in love, or I didn't get to see my children get married and have kids. Sometimes I minister to dying people who have many regrets over things they will miss or things they wish they had done.**

**On the other hand, maybe you would be so excited at the prospect of eternal life that you don't care about any worldly things left behind. I have ministered to people like that too. In fact, I had one family member tell me that her loved one didn't even seem to care that she was dying! She's just walking away from all these loose ends and letting someone else deal with them. It was not that she didn't care about her loved ones. It was that she knew that her time here was done and she was incredibly excited about entering paradise and receiving her eternal reward.**

**Whatever the case, whether we would be melancholy about dying at 5:00 pm tonight or joyful, people don't come back from the dead, so we would know that whatever our lives were – as of 5:00 pm they were what they were and the book will be closed. The man from Nain, whom we hear about in the Gospel, was being carried to his tomb, and he was surely convinced that his life was over because people don't come back from the dead.**

**The same is true for the son of the widow of Zarephath in the Old Testament. Good bad or indifferent – life was done and death cannot be undone. Right? Well not when it comes to the Lord of Life. Apparently it is all up to him. Jesus speaks to the young man in Nain and says simply "Young man, I say to you, arise." Now of course those of us who have lost someone to death think well where was he when my loved one died. We are so tempted to ask that but that is not a question for us to ask and neither is it an answer for us to have. And that's the point. Life is in the hands of God and not us. He gave it and on the day he gave it, the days were numbered. When that number is up, we return to heaven to be with him. We are only on loan to this world, heaven is our real home. If we die before our number of days is completed, he can command our bodies back from death. He has done this in the past. Perhaps you have experienced it for yourself, a situation in which you or a loved one**

**was dead, and came back. So since we know that he has given us a finite number of days and that he commands us back from death if those days are shortened, then we may assume that he surely has something in mind for us while we're here.**

**Look at the Introit appointed for today. It is from Psalm 138 and King David wrote it. He says,**

**Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me.**

**The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.**

**King David proclaims that the Lord will fulfill his purpose for him. David had gone from shepherd boy to King of Israel. He had seen victory and defeat. He had joy and sadness. He looked back on a long life of extreme ups and downs and saw the many ways in which God had still, in the midst of all the drama, fulfilled his purpose in him. That's the point. It's not my purpose that matters. It's his purpose and where I allow my purpose and his purpose to conflict, I am always going to be disappointed because he will always win.**

**The goal of life is not to be wealthy and powerful. We don't pray, "Oh God give me a million dollars or even give me that promotion at work or an "A" on that test. Rather, we pray that God would help us, first, simply to understand his purpose for us, and,**

**secondly, to help us to embrace it and glorify him with it. Word and sacrament empowers us to do just that.**

**As we hear his Word, receive his body and blood and remember the power of our Baptisms, we slowly begin to loosen our grip on the reins of our lives and begin instead to seek not only to understand his purpose for us but to fulfill it. As we grow stronger and stronger in him, we will find greater and greater joy in his purpose for our lives and we will find it easier to let go of our own imaginations.**

**Therein lies true joy in this life. We rejoice as God fulfills his purpose in us and we wait with eager anticipation as it happens.**