

#30 15-16

Psalms 146

1 Kings 17:8-16

Galatians 1:11-24

\*Luke 7:11-16

## *God Meets Our Greatest Needs*

Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

What we have here is the tale of a person who was suffering, in fear, and the Son of God feels her pain, and meets her needs so that she does not have to suffer. What we had in the Old Testament reading was similar - Elijah met this family who lived in fear of not having enough food to survive on, and this Prophet of God supplied this family's need. And in our Epistle reading Paul is declaring his qualifications to preach Christ. He is speaking rather defensively about his qualifications to know what is "Christian" and what is not. Not only is Galatians about declaring clearly to the Galatians themselves what a Christian needs and needs NOT to do in order to be a Christian, but PAUL is also speaking from a very personal place of *himself* needing to defend his right to preach, a right God gave him, no other humans.

So God is shown in each of these scriptures as supplying a factual need. A need for trust in the sacred as we saw with Elijah and the widow. She was sure she would go home, prepare the last meal for herself and her son, and die. But she did trust the Prophet and because she did so, "The jar of meal was not emptied, neither did the jug of oil fail." Her fear of dying due to poverty was overcome through trust in God.

And Paul, one who had persecuted the Christians, was placed in the dubious position of, time and time again, needing to defend his calling. His need for respect was met through the many churches he did create - but mostly through his closeness with the Sacred ~ regardless of what humanity may say and regardless of his life situation ~ in jail or not. He was given the clarity of thought and words he needed to instruct these believers into a healthier faith.

And in our Gospel we have the sadness of a woman who had lost her husband and her only son. What agony she must have been in. The loss must have seem irreparable. How could she ever imagine feeling the love, care, acceptance and identity again that she had had, when she was a wife and a mother? How lost she must have felt. And Christ felt with her. It was a pain he could not bear. So he restored her son to her. God meets the needs of those experiencing the pain of loss ~ so that soul can experience love and acceptance again.

God meets our greatest needs. And the church's job is to help remind people of this. Elijah was not God, he spoke and acted on God's behalf. Paul was not God, he spoke and acted on Christ's behalf. Christ is a part of God, and he taught us to act and speak as he did - on his behalf - and our actions are to be based in serving and being willing to suffer with each other.

So how does God meet our greatest needs?

I do believe that there are divine sacred moments which I attribute to God's interventions. Sometimes they are small events, like a thought popping into my head, sometime they are big events, like placing an opportunity right in my path so that I could not overlook it. Like when I came across the seminary, when Steve moved in across the hall from me, David being born, coming here, getting Dara . . . big miracles which seemed beyond my own imaginings.

God does meet our needs, but often we get distracted by our wants, or begin to focus on the pain that comes in the waiting. Before I was called, I was in pain, searching for a life direction. But once I got in there I was distracted by

the experience and almost forgot the pain. Same thing with every one of my other major miracles - before each there was a pain and a longing which one could almost forget once the miracle revealed itself.

Every one of our scripture stories involves an aching, a desire, a fear, followed by a resolution, an accounting of faith, a miracle!

For some things, God is miraculous, for others, we are asked to be God's miracles: by being attentive to each other; by caring about each other's pain; by being willing to trust each other with our needs; by being kind to each other. These are every day miracles which can be taken for granted.

Is someone sad, scared, lonely, in pain, suffering, feeling judged . . . if so, how can we put aside our own fears and anxieties long enough to be kind? Because kindness gets lost in today's world. It seems there is a feeling where, in order to survive in this world, we need to be ready to attack or be defensive or tell other where they are wrong. When truly everyone is in need of tenderness. And we are given a special opportunity to practice this within our own church family and beyond.

We practice miracles here. We practice putting aside our differences and trying to love and accept each other without expecting others to live up to our standards - rather, expecting ourselves to live up to Christ's standards.

We practice miracles here. We call each other, listen to each other, reach out to each other, not with words of gossip and bitterness, but with empathy and with the intent of easing each other's pain, not adding to it.

We practice miracles here. We find ways to discover where we have set a line of who can be in our circle of love and who cannot ~ and when we find that person on the other side, we change our line to include more and more people.

Yes, God meets our greatest needs, by helping us to meet other's greatest needs.

But, we are not alone in our experience of being miracles for each other. Because we do have Christ. A vessel through which we can receive strength and inspiration ~ and a power . . . a power which comes from all that is holy.

There are many tales of women who lost their greatest loves and support such as this widow, and they could not have them returned to them as she did. Yet, they found a richness in their life of faith. St. Elizabeth Anne Seton, is one! So even if Christ cannot come and return our losses to us, he can give us some life of faith and service, and joy. We may never forget who we have lost, but our lives will not lose their purpose. And this is also a miracle. For when we are in pain, we often lose sight of our purpose.

This is why we need each other. To remind each other of our purpose. And each one of us has a purpose, whether we are aware of it or not.

Often it is not what we think it is! We may think our purpose is to provide financial support - when our greatest purpose is our smile of encouragement when someone is sad. Our greatest purpose may be sharing the suffering we have experienced with others that they may not feel alone. We may think our purpose is what we do - when it is actually how we are with each other.

In our scriptures today we discovered that God met the needs of trust in the Almighty; closeness with the sacred; and returning purpose to those ancient people in this book. But if we are truly honest with each other, can't we say that one way or another, God has done the same for us at one time or another, and we have done the same for others? Whether we know it or not - we probably have . . . but in the very least, we know we have tried, and will continue to try to be God's Miracles on earth.

AMEN