

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**First Sunday after Trinity, June 26, 2011**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 19, 210:1-2, 201, 616, 138:5-6.

Lessons: 1 Kings 17:1-24, 1 Corinthians 15:12-26, John 11:17-45.

Sermon Text: Luke 7:11-17.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

It is a scientific fact that as soon as a human is born, death begins in the person. The human body, even as it is growing and reproducing cells for growth or maintaining life, has cells dying and not being replaced. The older we get, the more we realize that our bodies are growing weaker, and yes, dying. Our aches and pains increase. Minor injuries that heal very quickly in little children take longer to heal, and even sprains that young people seem to shake off linger for weeks or months. I could just make this paragraph a lament of old age and complain about the pains of old age. But that's not the point I want to make. Humans have nothing more than death to look forward to, no matter how optimistically young people look at life.

Yet humans continue to seek some kind of eternal life here on earth. But it won't happen. Not on this earth. Yet not everything is hopeless. Today from the Word of God I want to offer eternal hope and remind you that

**GOD GIVES LIFE**

- 1. Jesus gives earthly life back to a young man of Nain.**
- 2. Jesus gives eternal life back for all mankind.**
- 3. Praise be to God for this!**

Even before God created Eve to be with Adam in the Garden of Eden, he told Adam that he would die if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. *"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" Genesis 2:15-17*

Of course, you know what happened. Eve and Adam ate from that tree and mankind has been suffering every since. The curse which mankind has to endure includes death, described in this way: *"By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."* Genesis 3:19

And so death was decreed for mankind. Humans didn't physically experience this until the horrible death of Cain murdering his brother Abel, and Adam and Eve in this way also experienced death. Ever since that time every human has had to die. We read in Genesis 5:5 *"Altogether, Adam lived 930 years, and then he died."* But before his death, we read that Adam had at least six generations of humans before he died, for Genesis 4 tells of the descendants of Cain and there is brief mention of their wickedness, including more murder. So you can see that mankind was steeped in death even before the death of the first man who was created.

So what does that have to do with the miracle in our sermon text? In this single miracle we see the power that Jesus Christ, the very Son of God who came to die eternally in our place, had over death even while he lived on earth.

In Jesus' day it was especially difficult for a widow, as it was also in our Old Testament lesson. There were no safety nets as we know them today: Social Security, general assistance, food stamps and all the other assistance that people today might use. A widow had to live on what her husband and perhaps she had saved or set aside, or depend on her children to provide for her. This young man who had died was the only son of his widowed mother. So she had very little to look forward to except the charity of her neighbors, friends, and possibly relatives.

But Jesus helps her, and in a miraculous way. In last week's gospel lesson, the verses immediately preceding our sermon text, Jesus had healed a man who was sick. Now he goes even further and heals someone who was dead. Luke had previously written of Jesus as the Lord who has authority to forgive sins, as Lord of the Sabbath, and now he is presented as the Lord who even has power over death.

But the life which Jesus provided in raising this child from the dead, just as Elijah did in our Old Testament lesson, does not last forever. If it did, both young men in our scripture lessons would be still living today. No matter how long one lives, or if one should be brought back to life today, that person will still die eventually. We are reminded of the parable of the rich man whose land produced a good crop. He built bigger barns and said *"I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."* Luke 12:19-21

No one will live forever on earth, and the older we get, the more we yearn for heaven, where there will be no pain, no sorrow, no sadness, only blessedness and joy.

So what is really the benefit of living as long as some of the earliest patriarchs did in the Bible? There is no lasting benefit.

Yet both Elijah in our Old Testament Lesson and Jesus in our sermon text raised one from the dead to live a longer life on earth. These young men had their lives restored to them. They were free to live and become productive members of society. They were now free and alive to serve God for a longer time here on earth.

But the sad fact is that they both had to die again. They had to leave this earthly life. We know nothing more of these two young men, or their families. Their names are not even mentioned.

But there is hope for these two young men beyond this earthly life. There is hope for every believer in Christ, yes, there is the assurance of eternal life for every believer in Christ.

Jesus gives eternal life back for all mankind. In the garden of perfection, Adam and Eve sinned and death came upon all men because of that. Jesus restored the life man was meant to live when he rose from the dead himself.

Scripture speaks both of God raising Jesus and of Jesus raising himself. And that fact, which many deny despite repeated scriptural teachings of that fact, is something God gives for our comfort. Jesus paid to God the price demanded for sin. He lived a perfect life and did not sin, which is what mankind could have done if the first humans had not thought that they knew better than God and disobeyed God. And Jesus died for all

mankind, in behalf of all mankind, thus paying the price that God the Father demanded for sin. But death wasn't the end for him. On the third day he rose again from the dead.

Jesus restored the perfect life man was intended to live, and which all believers will live in heaven with Jesus. The joyful fact is that Jesus died for all mankind. Because God the Holy Spirit has worked faith in the hearts of all who believe, and even in our hearts, we will share in this joy. But for everyone who does not believe this redemption is, in effect, wasted. Scripture plainly teaches that ***"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*** Mark 16:16

Can there be anything more comforting than those words for the Christian, for the believer? Those words mean that we will live forever, not just in this body which grows older and weaker and closer to death every day, but in a glorified body, raised from the dead to live with Jesus forever! The book of Revelation contains some marvelous pictures of heaven and its joys and perfection. That is a glorious place where all believers in Christ shall live an everlasting life. There will be no death for all who believe that Jesus paid the price for their sins.

We will live forever, because God has paid the price for our sins! You hear in every sermon how your sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. In the sacrament of the altar you receive a visible sign and seal that you can see, smell, taste, and touch that Jesus' body and blood were given for you. We are reminded of the truth found in God's Word by the words of Martin Luther which we memorized: "He is properly prepared who believes these words: 'Given' and 'poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.'"

Jesus gave eternal life, what God intended, back to all mankind. God WANTS all men to be saved! What a joy that we believe and receive that eternal life. We pray for all mankind, that they, too, may come to faith in Jesus Christ.

So what is the result of our being saved eternally, of receiving eternal life?

Look at how the woman whose son Elijah raised from the dead praised God: ***"Then the woman said to Elijah, 'Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.'" 1 Kings 17:24***

Look at how the people who saw the miracle of our sermon text reacted: ***"They were all filled with awe and praised God. 'A great prophet has appeared among us,' they said. 'God has come to help his people.' This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country."***

The people who saw this and believed praised God!

Can we do anything different? Aren't we also excited, and rejoice that God has done this for us? Don't we want to praise God, too? Jesus is truly a great prophet. His words are the words of eternal life.

We could take the words we learned about the First Article of the creed and apply this to the joyous work of Jesus Christ, too: "All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him."

May God lead us to rejoice each day over what he has done for us, and to praise him each day, and to share this good news with others! Amen.