

❧ Sermon Reflections ❧

Some Things Never Change

In the 9th cent. B.C., Israel had all but forgotten the mission God had covenanted with her, and her forebearers, Abraham and Sarah: “I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing ... [for] all the families of the earth” (Gen. 12:2b, 3c). After King David and Solomon, the following kings of Israel/Judah became gluttonous and indifferent toward the needs of their people as with neighboring nations. At the time of our OT Lesson, one such king – King Ahab of Israel – had started swapping gods as well as wives when he married the infamous Queen Jezebel (a cross between Phyllis Diller and Genghis Kahn!) of Sidon-Tyre, along with her dowry of idol worship.

The New In An Old, Old Story

Out of the countryside of Sidon-Tyre came a spreading drought/famine. Yet, into the broken heart of it all – passing over Israel (cf. Gospel text from three Sundays back, Luke 4:26!) – God sends his prophet, Elijah to of all places, Sidon-Tyre ... where there lives a poor widow and her young son in a town called Zarephath. Elijah comes to live in the “upstairs apartment” of the widow. He brings God’s word and hope in the midst of the famine. But then the little boy dies and a theodicy occurs: “Is God punishing me? ‘Man of God’ why did you do this to me? To remind God of my sins and so cause my son’s death?” (I Kings 17:18). In a dramatic symbolic scene ... God’s Spirit through the prophet’s spirit, brings life to the little child (God’s world) that’s fallen asleep and spiritually dead ... Prayers answered. New life for the widow’s son and her. Death defeated?

A Haunting Question

In the face of “the last enemy” (I Cor. 15:26), death ... where can we turn? To whom shall we go?

There’s something incomplete about the story of the widow’s son returned to life. It’s a beautiful story. Could almost end with: “And they lived happily ever after.” Only, they didn’t. In that instance death took-it-on-the-chin, but it wasn’t defeated. The widow died as did her son, eventually. And in the face of death this beautiful story drives us beyond itself. For death still confronts us.

The Surprising Answer: In A Word

This story drives us beyond the OT to the New: to our question of where to turn in the face of death. It comes from God himself in Christ. St. Luke’s account for us today, of Jesus bridging the divine and death in his healing touch for another widow’s son in Nain (Luke 7:22-17), is something of a prelude to the greatest Word of all: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that all who believe in him shall not die but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And so the widow of Zarephath says to Elijah: “Now I know you are a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is truth” (17:24; cf. Isa. 25:8). We’re called to share this Word. It never runs out. Death defeated. Life renewed... May God’s Word also take-up such Spirited, faithful residence in our words. (j.r. christopherson)



CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

Second Grade Milestone

Sunday, Feb. 5, 2017

Carter Brady
Elleh Brown
Wilnel Farhat
Addison Fincher
Avery Hangman
Moa Hein
Nathanial Herbst
Spencer Hernes
Braxton Kirstein
Camila Langenfeld
Zachariah Lunn

Jacob Madsen
Owen McElroy
Lindsey Ohling
Molly Raymond
Ingrid Ready
Jack Shockman
Kyle Simpson
Ella Smith
Opland Sonnichsen
Ingrid Thompson
Kylie Visker



“If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

– 1 John 1:9