

## “When Jesus Shows Up”

Luke 7:11-17

6/9/13

This past week at one of our home meetings one of the topics that came up was the fact that each pastor who has served Community Lutheran has had a different combination of gifts.

Some pastors excel at preaching and teaching.  
Some are tremendous counselors and chaplains.  
And others are strong leaders and administrators.

I was visiting with a member at the end of the meeting and we agreed that whatever set of gifts a pastor has, more than anything else,  
the goal of every pastor is not to have you follow him or her, but to help you see Jesus.

That's really the goal of every Christian isn't it?  
...to reflect the love of Christ  
...to let Christ shine through everything we do.

So let me ask you, “What are you known for?”  
What rises to the top, when people are thinking about you, or talking about you?  
What do your friends and family members see in you?  
What do your neighbors and people who know you from work see in you?

Now I fully realize that even at our best, people will see the things that make us human.  
People will still see our flaws,

But listen to this promise.

As we draw near to God, God promises to draw near to us.  
As we open ourselves to God's Word, God's Word will shape us and form us,  
and help us reflect the light of Christ.

That's what is happening this morning.  
That's what God is doing in your life right now.  
Through your singing, and your praying, and through your hearing of God's Word  
you are being shaped and formed into the image of Christ.  
That's how people begin to see Jesus in you.

Think about the transformation in Paul's life that we heard about in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading.  
Saul who had been persecuting Christians and trying to destroy the church  
became Paul, a man who loved and served Jesus.

Once Paul caught a glimpse of who Jesus really is, his life changed forever.

Once Paul could see Jesus, people began to see Jesus in Paul.

There are a lot of people in this world who are hurting.  
A lot of people who are hungry and thirsty for the Good News that Jesus brings.

But sadly, there are people all around us who have never truly seen Jesus.  
I still remember the time I met a couple of boys who were climbing a tree outside the church I served in central Iowa.

We started talking, and I asked if they wanted a tour of the church building and they said sure.  
And when we got to the sanctuary we sat down for a minute and looked up at all the stained glass windows.

And just out of curiosity I asked the boys if they knew who was pictured in the window above the altar.

One of the boys looked up and said, "I don't know, Moses?"

In the window behind that altar was Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

But how else would he know?  
He had never been in a church before.  
He had never been to Sunday school.

How will children like him hear who Jesus is, unless they see Jesus in us?  
And how will they find a church, unless we invite them?  
and teach them the Gospel stories about Jesus,  
like the one we heard this morning in Luke, chapter 7.

This morning's Gospel is a story of healing and resurrection but it's much more than that.  
In this event, we see Jesus for who He truly is.

We see Jesus entering a town.  
And as He enters this Galilean village he meets a funeral procession  
He sees a young man who had died, being carried on a funeral stretcher.

And Jesus sees his mother, a widow,  
and he hears that this young man was her only Son.

When Jesus saw this woman he had great compassion.  
Jesus knew that in that society she had not only lost her Son, she had lost everything.  
If you were a widow at that time, and you lost your only Son, that meant you lost your livelihood.  
There was no social safety net.

No Social security... nothing.

Luke tells us that when Jesus saw her, he had compassion...  
and the Greek word for "compassion" here is a gut-level compassion  
something people could see on His face, something he felt right here.  
And then he spoke to her, and said, "Do not weep."

He said this not to stifle her grief, but because he was about to do a great miracle.  
And he reached out and touched the funeral stretcher.

And immediately, everybody froze, because that was something you did not do.  
In that culture it made you ritually unclean to touch the funeral stretcher.

But just like God reaches across the barriers of our sin, across the barriers that we create...  
Jesus reached out and said, "Young man, I say to you arise."

And the dead man, sat up, and Jesus gave him to his mother.  
And the people all glorified God.  
They said, "this man must be a prophet...he must be from God  
because God has surely blessed us."

Now here is something just as amazing.  
This story is not just about some people from Bible times...  
this story is about you and me.

This story is not just about Jesus showing up in the life of this widow.  
This is a story about Jesus showing up in your life and mine.

Just as Jesus reached out and had compassion on that woman,  
Jesus reaches out to you and me with hope and healing.  
That's who Jesus is. That's what Jesus does.

Even when we stand at the grave of a loved one,  
when the only word we think we hear is death...

Jesus still breaks through with the promise of eternal life.  
Death is not the end... but only the beginning of life with Him.

The Jesus we see in today's Gospel  
is no less than the Son of God...with the power to heal, and save, and forgive.

And as people see Jesus. And as they see Jesus reflected in your life and mine,  
may they glorify God, so that all may believe. Amen.