

Trinity 16 (2026)

As a boy I attended the funeral of a 12-year-old cousin who had died in a hunting accident.

As I recall, he had tripped on a vine causing his rifle to discharge. I was a few years younger than he at the time, so the details are a bit blurry.

What I do remember was the feeling of helplessness that pervaded the funeral home that day.

Everyone wanted to do or say something to make the situation better but were powerless to do so.

Powerlessness comes in all shapes and sizes.

Your car breaks down on the side of the highway. Vehicles are speeding by. Meanwhile, you have an appointment in 15 minutes. It does

not take long to realize that you are not going to make it. The situation is outside your control.

You are at your gate at an airport ready to board a flight and an announcement comes over the loudspeaker system saying your flight has been cancelled because of bad weather.

You are left looking out the plate glass window at the falling snow and stranded planes. Who knows how long you are going to be in that airport.

Powerlessness is likewise writ large over the incident recorded in this morning's Gospel, the story of the Widow of Nain.

Like the mother I told about earlier, she had lost her son, and in her case, her only son, and besides that, she was a widow. She had no one. It doesn't get any worse than that.

There was nothing she could do to bring her son back, and there was nothing her neighbors could do to make her pain go away. So, they did the only thing they could do, they trudged along behind her in the procession of death.

But then something unexpected happened. This procession was met by a very different procession, this one headed by the Lord and giver of life.

When these two processions met, the first words out of Jesus' mouth were words of comfort, **“Weep not.”**

If anyone else had spoken these words, they would have rung hollow, but not so when Jesus spoke them. Only He could back them up with power.

And back them with power He did. The next words out of his mouth were: **“Young man, I say unto thee, arise.”**

It has been said that Jesus would have made the world's worst funeral director, and this is a true observation. After all, He broke up every funeral He attended, including this one.

He turned an occasion of sorrow into a celebration of life. I might add, a true celebration of life.

I say “true” because in some circles today “funeral” has been replaced with “celebration of life.” I suppose because the latter sounds less grim.

A chief feature at these “celebrations” is telling stories about the deceased.

Please don't misunderstand me. Telling stories and sharing memories are good things, but they do not bring the dead back to life. Jesus takes “celebration of life” to a new level. He gives this widow woman back her son.

What does this miracle say about Jesus?

I have already told you. He is the “Lord and giver of life.”

In this account we find Him doing what God had done in the beginning, breathing life into a lifeless piece of clay.

Those who witnessed this miracle were right in crying out, **“A great prophet is risen up among us.”**

But, if that is all they saw in Jesus, they were missing the main point. Jesus was more than a prophet. He was Immanuel, God with us.

So far, we have looked at this story as something that happened in the distant past. Some may take this to mean that it has little or no relevance to our lives in the present.

Not so! It is pregnant with meaning for people of all time

To paraphrase Paul's words in Romans 15:4, those things that happened in the past were written **for our learning**.

What then might we learn from today's Gospel?

Three things in particular stand out. Each may be summarized with words which begin with the letter "P": **pity, power** and **promise**.

Let's begin with the first, pity. In this story we get a glimpse of the **pity of God**. By 'pity' I mean concern and compassion.

Jesus' heart goes out to this weeping widow. Actually, the Greek puts it more graphically: His inward parts, His guts, were wrenched at the sight of her and her plight.

If Jesus indeed reveals the invisible God as no one else in history, what does this say about God? ///

He is not some far-away, detached, stoic deity. He is a God of compassion and concern, one near at hand.

He cares about what's going on in your life. Put your finger on what is hurting and ask Him to reach out His hand and touch it just as Jesus did the brier on which the body of this young man was lying.

And, by the same token, we should have this same pity for those we encounter on the roadway of life who are suffering. We are called to be Jesus' hands and feet and voice in this present world.

Then, as the story moves forward, we find Jesus' pity being matched by His **power**.

Jesus not only feels our pain and carries our sorrows, He, as we have already seen, is able to do something about them. Powerlessness is not one of his attributes.

Perhaps you have found yourself in a situation where you were deeply moved by something that was going on in the life of another. Perhaps this person had experienced a catastrophic loss. You wanted to help, but you felt helpless. All you could do was to be there.

Let me hasten to say: Never underestimate the power of presence. Often presence means more than words.

Even so, Jesus went beyond presence. He brought **power**.

**“He speaks, and, listening to his voice, new life the dead receive,”** to quote Charles Wesley’s hymn.

There is an application here for us. When Jesus shows up everything is changed.

He brings power to move beyond old destructive ways of thinking and doing . . . power to put aside crippling fear . . . power to receive and extend forgiveness . . . power to speak out for truth and justice . . . power to make a difference in the world . . . power to face both life and death.

Recognize your powerlessness and embrace His power. This is the way to victory in life.

Take a minute to think about situations in your own life over which you have little or no control. Hand them over to the God of power and might.

Pity, power and finally, **promise**.

The raising of the widow of Nain's son was more than a one-off miracle. It anticipated an even greater one, the raising of Jesus Himself.

The young man spoken of in today's Gospel was **resuscitated**. He was brought back to life but eventually would have to die again.

Not so with Jesus. He was raised never to die again. He is alive for evermore.

That, my brothers and sisters, is the life promised to each one of us, indeed to all who have been united to Him in faith and baptism.

Because He lives, we shall live also.

Death remains an enemy, but is a conquered one.

Paul says as much when he writes in Romans 8:11: **“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you,**

**he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”**

So, we have before us this morning more than a tale of something that happened in the long ago.

Recounting the main points, today’s Gospel reminds us of:

- **The pity of God.** You don’t have to let the challenges of life overwhelm you. You are not alone. God cares.
- **The power of God.** God not only cares but is able to bring about endurance and hope in every situation of life.
- **The promise of God.** What happened to Jesus on Easter morning will happen to everyone marked as His own. Death will not have the final word. ///

As I prepare to close, let me extend an invitation.

The procession of life continues to go by, with all and sundry being invited to join in. Don't let it pass you by this morning.

“Come join this holy band, and on to glory go. Only trust Him, only trust Him. He will save you now.”