

# “Raised from the Dead”

*10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*

*1 Kings 17:17-24; Galatians 1:11-24, Luke 7:11-17*

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*June 5, 2016*

From the Pulpit

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A Communion Meditation delivered by The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Ahrens, Sr. Minister, The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, Proper 5, 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, June 5, 2016, dedicated to the memory of Robert Sitler who was born June 5, 1929 and died June 5, 1974, a great man, dedicated professor and a wonderful father to his children including my wife Susan Sitler, to the choirs of First Church and our Music Minister Kevin Jones, to all our 2016 graduates, to our mission team headed to Franklinton and to our Christian Education Director, Mark Williams and always to the glory of God!

***“Raised from the Dead”***

***1 Kings 17:17-24, Galatians 1:11-24, Luke 7:11-17***

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*Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our salvation. Amen.*

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**Raising the dead is part of God’s work and God’s plan in this world. That is what Holy Scripture shows us and tells us. Today we have heard two of the nine stories of individuals that God raises from the dead in the Bible. Of these miraculous resurrections, three occur in the Hebrew Scriptures and at least**

six occur in the Christian Scriptures. Elijah resurrects the son of Zarephath's widow. Elisha resurrects the son of the great Shunammite woman (II Kings 4:35) and a dead man comes back to life when lowered into Elisha's grave and his body comes in contact with Elisha's bones (II Kings 4:31).

Jesus raises at least three people from the dead – the widow of Nain, Jarius' daughter and Lazarus. In addition, the tombs were open and the saints arose when Jesus was crucified according to Matthew 27. We also read that both Peter and Paul raise the dead. Peter raises a female disciple named Tabitha from the dead in Acts 9:36-42. Paul raises Eutychus from the dead in Acts 20:9-12. Most well-known and important of all - God raises Jesus from the dead – a story which is told in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (Matthew 28:5-7, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-11, and John 20:1-10).

In addition, through the ages people believe that Paul himself was resurrected after he was stoned and left for dead outside the city in Acts 14:19-20. In spite of being “Stoned unto death,” Paul stands up, walks back into the city with his disciples and then goes to Derbe with Barnabas the next day

(Some of sleep in when we have had a flu bug. Paul walks desert highways the day after being stoned unto death).

**Raising the dead is part of God's plan in the world** – which is wonderful and miraculous at so many levels but can become troubling at another level to everyone who has lost a loved one and for whom these beloved have NOT been raised from the dead. At some level, that includes everyone in this room today. If, through the power of Jesus Christ, God raised the widow's son, Jarius' daughter, and Lazarus (to say nothing of the prophet Elijah, Elisha, Peter and Paul raising the dead) **why didn't God raise our sons and daughters who were lost, our siblings, our parents, our friends and family members who died too soon or too terribly? Why are unnamed scriptural figures raised and not those whom we named at their birth and we held in our arms unto death? Why were they not raised?**

At the level of the rising, these stories are beautiful! At the level of the laying our beloved into the earth, these stories are disconcerting and perhaps deeply troubling. When something troubles us, we tend to stay far away from the troubling feelings. **We can't stand that much pain. We don't like death** with no answers – except the answers provided on death certificates or autopsies. The harder the death of our loved ones, the deeper the pain these stories may create in our hearing them.

In spite of our non-resurrection stories and the pain we encounter in the face of death, in spite of all that, I would like us to take away the blessings of these “raised from the dead” stories. There are common themes in each of the resurrection stories. **First, there is faith. Faith in God (or faith in God’s special agents – Elisha, Elijah, Jesus, Peter and Paul) to raise a loved one back to life is at the heart of every story.** In each story someone has unconditional faith in God, which gets the resurrection enzymes flowing. Deepening our faith in God to do everything from giving us hope, to granting us healing to raising the dead would help us all.

With a person’s faith alive and well, the door is opened to the possibility of the dead being raised. **In each case it is a prophet of God who raises the dead.** It is someone who abounding faith himself – who raises the dead. Make no mistake about it, being a prophet of God arising among the people of God gives you a chance to raise the dead. Even more, it is the compassion of that prophet which makes all the difference in the world. Through the prophet – in each story – we feel that God is “visiting the people.” There is a sense that the innocent ones, the lovely ones, the ones who died too soon are embraced by God’s prophets and given a new lease of life. Faith, compassion and God’s abiding presence all weave together to bring about the raising of the dead.

In this present day, there are stories of miracles abounding. **Through God's love and grace and through God's presence and power there are new stories coming forth about the dead being raised.** I recently came across a number of stories about children being raised from death to life in Africa. All the elements of faith in God, a compassionate healer, and **the visitation of God's angels of mercy all occur in these** modern stories of resurrection. As the dead children were raised in Africa, doctors, villagers, and others came to have faith in Jesus Christ.

Whether you and I embrace and believe these stories – ancient or modern – reflects more on us than on God. Remember, **resurrection of the dead is part of God's work and God's plan in this world.** If we didn't believe that at some level, then the feast of which we are about to partake – the feast of the Risen Christ – makes no sense either. Friends, believe the good news of Jesus Christ, our Risen Savior, God is still raising the dead. And God begin with each one of us today. Come to the table of the Risen Christ, my friends.

Through faith in God, may that which is dead in you be turned to new life. Amen.

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