

PENTECOST: IN FAITH WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Second Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 5)

June 10, 2007

1 Kings 17:17-24

Psalm 30

Galatians 1:11-24

Luke 7:11-17

Restored to Life

*And I will raise you up, and I will raise you up,
and I will raise you up on the last day.
(Suzanne Toolan, 1927 --)*

To be raised to life is a promise that we have from Jesus (John 6:40), and the theme of being restored to life is strongly evident in all the readings for this week. The Old and New Testament lessons recount the revival of widows' sons; the psalmist expresses gratitude to God for recovery from a grave illness; and the apostle Paul describes his life-changing encounter with the living Lord. All four lessons affirm that "nothing is impossible for God" (Luke 1:37, *CEV*) who "raised Christ from death" (Ephesians 1:20, *CEV*) and who has promised that all who have faith "will have eternal life" (Romans 5:21, *CEV*).

Those who witnessed the son of the widow of Nain being raised to life by Jesus would have been reminded similarly of the prophet Elijah's restoring to life the son of the widow of Zarephath. Not only was physical life restored to these two sons, but their widowed mothers were also spiritually restored. In both instances, God's glory and God's power over life and death was revealed. In the midst of deepest anguish, God is ever present in our lives. Just as Jesus assured his disciples that their sorrow would be turned to joy (John 16:20), the psalmist reminds us that God is able to turn our "sorrow into joyful dancing" (Psalm 30:11, *CEV*).

With songs of praise and joyful "alleluias" the Church recently celebrated the Resurrection of Our Lord; and because of Christ's triumph over sin and death on that first Easter, for Christians, every Sunday is now a celebration of that miraculous event. In the first century A.D., Christians assembled regularly on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2) to commemorate the "Lord's Day" and celebrate the new life and new hope believers shared in the risen Christ.

Two weeks ago, the Church celebrated the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, a day that marked the conclusion of the Easter cycle and the transition into the Pentecost season. With the cross of Christ before us, the Church, like a Spirit-led pilgrim, embarks upon its journey in mission. As "Easter people," Christians are now restored to new life

and empowered by the Holy Spirit to tell everyone about Jesus and make Christ known through the life and mission of the Church.

While many of us may not have had a conversion experience as dramatic as Paul's, we are, nevertheless, called as twenty-first century apostles to proclaim the new life we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul was transformed from persecutor to preacher. We have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit from death to life. "We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5a, *CEV*). Yes, we are indeed restored to life! Alleluia!

This week's Reflection was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Hungary – With thanks to God for the ability to witness faithfully to God's goodness through distribution campaigns and work among refugees, and for the success of Bible advocacy work at youth festivals, and with prayers for the new Bible revision project; **Poland** – With thanks for God's guidance and with prayers that more prisoners will open their hearts to God's Word and that work among children and young people will bring growing faith, love and joy; **Slovakia** – With thanks to God for the ecumenical Bible translation project, and with prayers for its publication this year and that this new translation will be used by God to touch and change many people; **Czech Republic** – With prayers that many children will read and understand the Children's Bible that is planned for publication in the Czech language.

Activity Corner: "A Prayer of Praise"

Supplies needed: Bible; writing paper or index cards; pens or pencils.

Read together Psalm 30. Consider reading it antiphonally (women/girls reading the odd-numbered verses, men/boys reading the even-numbered verses; or gathering in a circle with each one taking a turn reading a verse. The word "praise" appears three times in this psalm (verse 4, 9, 12). Discuss how the word is used in each of these three verses. For what is the psalm writer thankful? How does this psalm demonstrate the theme, "restored to life?" Distribute a sheet of writing paper or an index card to each member of your household. Across the top write, "Restored to Life," and encourage each one to write a prayer of praise, thanking God for a time when God turned their sorrow into joy. Use these prayers throughout the week during your family devotional time.