

A Life Belonging to the Lord

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 8b)

July 1, 2018

2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-15

Mark 5:21-43

²¹ And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. ²² Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet ²³ and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." ²⁴ And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. ²⁵ And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, ²⁶ and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. ²⁸ For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." ²⁹ And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" ³¹ And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" ³² And he looked around to see who had done it. ³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. ³⁴ And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." ³⁵ **While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"** ³⁶ **But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe."** ³⁷ **And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.** ³⁸ **They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.** ³⁹ **And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping."** ⁴⁰ **And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was.** ⁴¹ **Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."** ⁴² **And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.** ⁴³ And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

In the Name of Jesus.

When Jesus walks into a room, he brings life. The little girl belonged to death. Everyone sees that. The servants from Jairus's house, they know it, announcing "*Your daughter is dead, why trouble the teacher any further?*" [Mark 5:35].

Those standing around at the house, weeping and wailing, they know it. That's why they're crying—death gives no options; the little girl is gone.

Jairus knows it, too.

The little girl belonged to death. She is no longer a gift to anyone. The smiles she used to bring to people's faces, the hugs, they are no more. But when Jesus walks into a room, he brings life. Mark 5:41:

⁴¹ Taking her by the hand [Jesus] said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, rise."

Life, for Jesus, is not just biological life. It is certainly that. The dead girl *was* dead, she had no biological life.

But life, for Jesus, is full life, it's being a person, a human. It is life before his Father in Heaven. It is life overflowing with all the Lord's gifts, all the specifics and particularities that the Lord gives to each person uniquely.

Life is to have a name before God. It's to have God give you his Name to call upon him, person to person. And because God created man in his own image—*male and female created he them*—life means having life also before one another. You and I don't live just because of biological life, just because the right things are happening with our cardio-vascular system and electric impulses are being sent through our nervous system, but we have life because we are human, because we stand before one another with our own names, because we can know each other according to all the particularities that our Lord gives to each.

So, when Jesus restored to the little girl biological life, he then said to her, *get up*. And, then, Scripture tells us,

Immediately the girl stood up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement.

Jesus gives life. Full and whole life. He has not just given the little girl a beating heart and energized brain; he has given the little girl as a twelve-year old for her mother to grab with a tight hug, for her

father to bring food to her, for her grandparents to sing with, for her brothers and sisters to play with, for her friends to invite over for the next party.

He has given her as a gift to all those he loves around her. All her particularities—her love of certain foods, her perhaps strange sense of humor and unique laugh, her talent maybe to help around the house, also her weaknesses, those things people around her are given to help her with—maybe she has trouble studying her grammar or doing her math, maybe she's not good at social communication—Jesus has given her in all that she is in her strengths and gifts and all that she is in her weaknesses, he has given her as a gift to others.

Jesus brings life. Life is a gift. And by the will of God, our lives are given to others as gifts.

So, St. Paul, in writing to the Christians in Corinth about giving gifts, he mentions the Christians up in Macedonia, extolling how they give gifts.

Now, when we hear that Paul is going to give instruction about giving gifts, the first thing that comes to mind is probably, money. Offerings. How much a good Christian should give. Even tithing, even though the Apostle never uses the word tithing for the Christian. And Paul does talk about the offerings of the Macedonians, saying,

in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord.

[2 Corinthians 8:3]

We might be tempted to make this a make a list of how Paul is setting out principles for Christian giving. We could say that the giving should be proportional, and those given much should give much; and giving should be generous, not from stingy hands but from overflowing hearts; and giving should be voluntary, not coerced but of one's own accord. We could speak of all this, and it is all true. But surely, we must finally notice that Paul speaks of something else, something more.

Paul does not see Christian giving as a set of principles for the checking account. He sees it as a gift of life. 2 Corinthians 8:5:

[The Macedonians begged] us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the

saints—⁵ and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.

The Macedonians gave *themselves* to the Lord and then, according to God's will, to us, says Paul. They gave themselves to God, and in that, they gave themselves to the Church.

They didn't need to give themselves to God as if otherwise God wouldn't have them. Rather, they belonged to God. He gave them life. He created them. Then, he gave his own Son to redeem them from death. Then, having baptized them into his Name, he continued gathering them to the redeeming blood of the Lord's Table. So that, these Macedonians knew they belonged to him and from him they receive every good gift.

They acknowledged this. They gave themselves to him, thanking and praising him in the Lord's service. And in their lives, they extolled the Lord's gifts as they gave themselves to each other, to the Church.

Paul had written to them of the totality of the Lord's blessings upon their lives:

The God of peace sanctify you completely,

Paul wrote,

and your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is faithful, he will do it.

[1 Thessalonians 5:23]

Jesus is concerned with the whole you. He's not a God of the checkbook; he's the God of you. The complete you: spirit, soul, and body—your whole person, you according to your name, according to who you are, according to all your strengths and gifts, all your weaknesses, Jesus leaves nothing out.

Jesus entered the room and raised up the girl and he gave her as a gift to her family, to all those whom she loved. It was not some generic, biological life; it was her.

Jesus enters your life, coming to you in his Gospel, and raises you up, cleansing you of all sin, sanctifying you, making you holy in spirit, soul, and body, and according to his will, he gives you as a gift to your brothers and sisters, to the Church.

A gift in all your particularities. The father, the mother, given as gift to children, to keep safe, to teach, to give discipline where good.

The husband given as gift to the bride, to love and cherish, to give every good gift of husband.

The wife given as gift to the groom, to love and respect, to give every good gift of wife. The single person given as gift of friend and encourager to fellow saints.

All of us given as gifts for the benefit of each other, given to give gifts of comfort, of encouragement, of consolation, gifts of mutual joy, all of us given as generous servants of Christ Jesus.

And where we see that we have lived not as those who receive every good gift from the Lord, not as those who have been raised up to life by Christ Jesus, where we see our lack of generosity in giving ourselves to our family or neighbor, where we have been stingy in giving ourselves to the Church, there we turn to the Lord who raises up the dead.

Where we give gifts from tight hands, where we are fearful and stingy, we find him generous and overflowing, giving grace upon grace.

In his voice of Gospel, he turns us to himself. He raises us up.

We turn to him, letting the Old Adam in us be daily drowned to death in contrition and repentance. And we rejoice as Jesus daily raises up the new man of faith to life, daily forgiving and cleansing us, daily giving us to one another as gifts to one another, living before God in the righteousness of Jesus forever.

In the Name of Jesus.