

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we know that death is an ever present reality for each and every one of us. We also know, Lord, that death is the punishment for our sins. Lord, please, forgive us our sin. For the sake of Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, forgive our sins and though we die in this life, may You never allow us to die to You eternally. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Grace: God's undeserved love for each and every one of us. Mercy: God forgiving us our sin for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ. And Peace: peace of heart, peace of mind, peace with God. All of these are yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in the Gospel according to Saint Luke the seventh chapter beginning at the eleventh verse, and we read in Jesus' name (please rise):

Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. ¹² And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." ¹⁵ So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. ¹⁶ Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people." ¹⁷ And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

Heavenly Father, these are Your words and therefore they are the truth. We pray, Lord, that You would increase our faith through them. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

In the book of Second Kings chapter four we are told the story of the Shunnamite woman and her son. In this account, Elisha the prophet had been passing through the region and the woman wanted to offer him a place to lay his head on his journeys. So, one day Elisha asked what the woman would want in return for her kindness. She requested nothing, but Elisha promised her a son. The woman conceived and had a son.

However, as he grew up and before he reached an old age, the son died. The Shunnamite woman was broken on the inside. She took the boy, carried him up to Elisha's room and laid him on the bed. When

Elisha learned about the death, he came to the Shunnamite woman's house and God raised the boy from the dead. Once alive, Elisha told his servant to call for the Shunnamite woman that she may come and take her son. Once she entered the room and saw her son alive, she fell at Elisha's feet, bowed to the ground, and took her son.

This woman who recognized the man of God, Elisha, and the Spirit of God upon him, paid homage to God once Elisha raised her son. Now just imagine the adoration and praise you would heap upon someone who has raised your loved one from the dead. Surely the words of our text would ring from your mouth, "***God has visited His people!***"

In the Gospel of Saint Luke we have two great processions meeting. There is the procession of death coming out of the city of Nain. This is led by a grief stricken mother and those who knew the family and the boy.

They were heart broken and couldn't believe that they had lost someone so close to them. The other procession is a procession of life. Life itself, Jesus Christ, was walking into the city with His disciples and His growing throngs following closely. Then the two processions met.

And here is the description of your very own life. Initially we are part of that second procession... the one of death. When you are conceived, you are conceived in sin. When you are born, you are born dead in sin. While you live your life, you are dead in sin. Because of our first parents, Adam and Eve, and their disobedience we have inherited Original Sin, our inability to love, trust, and have faith in God. We are conceived in this original sin, we are born with original sin, and we will live our entire lives with this original sin still clinging to us. And because of this original sin, we are spiritually dead.

According to the Augsburg Confession, “***all human beings who are born in the natural way are conceived and born in sin... from birth they are full of evil lust and inclination and cannot by nature possess true fear of God and true faith in God... original sin is truly sin and condemns to God's eternal wrath.***”

And this is our lot in life. We will always have this original sin with us. We are never able to perfectly love, trust, and have faith in God. Our old Adam, our sinful nature, constantly clings to us and wants us to sin. Our sinful nature wants us to hate those crazy socialists who are trying to ruin the country; our sinful nature wants us to treat God's Word as no more than any other book that someone wrote to help us 'be better;' our sinful nature wants us to lie, cheat, and steal in order to 'get ahead' and then use that as the excuse to feel better about it. Our sinful nature wants us to turn from God and

betray Him. Our sinful nature wants nothing to do with God and is most pleased when God is not in the picture at all.

And then because of our sins we die. Death is the ultimate consequence of sin. Even God says through Paul, “*the wages of sin is DEATH.*” What we earn, what we deserve, because of our sin is death... and each of us will receive death. Short of Jesus coming back, we will all die. There is no escape from death. We cannot freeze ourselves to be thawed later. We will not be reincarnated and thus continue to live. When our time is up, we will DIE, period.

Yet, until that final moment arrives, until that final breath is drawn... we are living in our ‘time of grace.’ While we are still alive, we are living in our time of grace. Our one and only chance to know Jesus Christ and all that He has done for us.

Jesus Christ came into this world because He knew that we were all sinners and that we would continue to sin throughout our lives. Jesus knew that the wage of our sin is death... and Jesus sought to help us. So Jesus came into this world and lived a perfect life. He lived a life in total fear, trust, and love of God the heavenly Father. He lived to the glory of God with everything that He did. He was the perfect Son of God, perfectly fulfilling all of God’s commands and laws. Jesus never once sinned.

And for His perfect life, Jesus Christ was killed by sinners. When the time had come, Jesus Christ was killed. He was beaten and falsely tried. He was whipped and forced to carry a cross. He was hung on a cross and He died. And as Isaiah tells us, “*The chastisement for our peace was upon Him.*” Jesus Christ lived, suffered, and died for us. He did everything for us.

And thanks be to God that the story does not end there. Three days later Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He rose to proclaim that death and hell could not hold Him. He rose to show that those who have faith in Him will rise also. And He rose because Jesus Christ is life... and death cannot conquer life.

And now through faith in our Savior we have salvation. Through faith in Jesus Christ and in all that He has done for us, we know that heaven is waiting for us. Yes, through faith, we now have eternity with God as our future.

Yes, we will still die. We will still see a final day on this earth, and that is okay. People will be sad. People will miss us. There will be much that is still 'undone' in our eyes... but when God calls us home; well, thanks be to God that He does.

As the Formula of Concord says, "***The damage is such that only God can separate human nature and the corruption of this nature from each other. This separation will take place completely through death, at the resurrection, when the nature which we now have will rise and live eternally, without original sin - separated and severed from it.***" This is what we have to look forward to. We will die, but with that death comes the separation of our human nature from our sinful nature. The human nature will ascend to heaven and the sinful nature will be separated from us.

And we know this happens because of the great procession of life that is led by our Savior Jesus Christ. Those who come with Jesus we can envision as the church. Gathering around Christ and wanting to hear His words. We are also a part of that group. We are not a part by our own choosing nor

by our own doing; rather, we have been chosen by God.

From all eternity we have been chosen by God to be His child. When we were born, very often God has claimed us as His own. Through the waters of baptism God claims each and every one of us. Through baptism, the water and the Word, God cleanses us from all of our sin and gives us faith in His Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. And then with that great crowd that surrounds Him, we listen to the words of Christ when we read and hear His word. When we read our Bibles, when we read devotions, when we hear a pastor preach from God's Word.. then we are hearing the voice of Christ as He continues to call out to all of us. And throughout this life, God continues to feed us also. Yes He gives us food and drink, but most importantly He gives us His Son's body and blood in the Lord's Supper. When we come forward to communion, we receive

the very body and blood of Christ for the remission of all of our sins. Through these means of grace God gives us our faith and continues to strengthen it.

Dear friends in Christ, in the city of Nain two processions met in the streets: one a procession of death, the other a procession of life. So, too, every Sunday in Omro, WI two processions meet: one a procession of death, the other a procession of life. We walk through this life with our sinful nature and thus death clinging to us and wanting to pull us down into hell. However, at the same time Jesus has given us baptism, His Word, and the Lord's Supper to give us life... and life eternal at that.

And just like in our text today, though we will die, though we will breathe one last breath this side of heaven; through faith in our Savior Jesus Christ He will approach our tombs, our coffins, He will stop the

procession of death, and He will say to us,
“Arise!”

Thanks be to God that He has claimed me as His own from all eternity. Thanks be to God that He loves me and sent His Son to live, die, and rise for me. And thanks be to God that though I have this sinful nature around me constantly, He has given me life through faith in His Son and through His most blessed means of grace.

Dear friends, ***God has visited His people!***
Thanks be to God. Amen.