

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
February 7, 2021

Hi Friends,

Greetings brothers and sisters in Christ.

The season of Lent is quickly approaching. This year a number of churches in the West Berks Mission District have joined together to put an Ash Wednesday service together. There are 20 different people from various churches who are participating (including yours truly). You can join in this service if you have Comcast TV cable services on Wednesday, Feb 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 on Channel 190 or if you have access to a computer you can sign on to our Zoom link and we will watch it together on Zoom. To participate in the imposition of ashes, we recommend that you use what you have available in your home like: ashes from a fireplace, or the soot of a burnt candle or even dirt from a house plant.

Holy Communion – the Worship and Music committee has recommended and the Council has approved moving to weekly Holy Communion beginning with the service on February 7.

If you have prayer request, please send them to me so that I can include them in my weekly newsletters.

Yours in Christ,            Pastor Denise

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## Luke 7:1-17

A reading from the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke beginning at the first verse.

**7** <sup>1-5</sup> When he finished speaking to the people, he entered Capernaum. A Roman captain there had a servant who was on his deathbed. He prized him highly and didn't want to lose him.

When he heard Jesus was back, he sent leaders from the Jewish community asking him to come and heal his servant. They came to Jesus and urged him to do it, saying, "He deserves this. He loves our people. He even built our meeting place."

<sup>6-8</sup> Jesus went with them. When he was still quite far from the house, the captain sent friends to tell him, "Master, you don't have to go to all this trouble. I'm not that good a person, you know. I'd be embarrassed for you to come to my house, even embarrassed to come to you in person.

Just give the order and my servant will get well. I'm a man under

orders; I also give orders. I tell one soldier, 'Go,' and he goes; another, 'Come,' and he comes; my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."

<sup>9-10</sup> Taken aback, Jesus addressed the accompanying crowd: "I've yet to come across this kind of simple trust anywhere in Israel, the very people who are supposed to know about God and how he works." When the messengers got back home, they found the servant up and well.

<sup>11-15</sup> Not long after that, Jesus went to the village Nain. His disciples were with him, along with quite a large crowd. As they approached the village gate, they met a funeral procession—a woman's only son was being carried out for burial. And the mother was a widow.

When Jesus saw her, his heart broke. He said to her, "Don't cry." Then he went over and touched the coffin. The pallbearers stopped. He

said, “Young man, I tell you: Get up.” The dead son sat up and began talking. Jesus presented him to his mother.

<sup>16-17</sup> They all realized they were in a place of holy mystery, that God was at work among them. They were quietly worshipful—and then noisily grateful, calling out among

themselves, “God is back, looking to the needs of his people!” The news of Jesus spread all through the country.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

## Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Let us pray:

Healing Lord,  
By your goodness you healed many who were ill, even raising the dead to life. Restore us to new life, healing our hearts, minds, and spirits, so that we may proclaim praise and gratitude for your compassion to all who will hear. In the name of the one who is himself new life, Jesus Christ our savior. Amen.

The last leg of life's journey, the procession following the funeral service to the gravesite led by a car or a van from the funeral home, followed by the hearse, followed by the car with the immediate family, and then the cars of the extended family and friends. A caravan of cars that slowly careens through the streets until it reaches the final resting place of the one who has died.

And we all know that when we come upon a funeral procession at an intersection, we respectfully wait for the procession to go by before continuing on our own personal journey. We don't squeeze in between the cars. We don't honk our horns for them to hurry up. We don't wave our arms and disrupt the solemn and sacred journey that is taking place right in front of our eyes.

And although the procession in Jesus day was on foot, I am sure that the expectations were similar. That is out of respect for the dead and the grieving family, the procession is to proceed uninterrupted.

But, in today's gospel story, Jesus doesn't stop and let the

procession proceed. Jesus doesn't stand silently on the side of the road to pay his respect for the lost loved one and the grieving widow.

Jesus breaks with tradition and interrupts the funeral procession. And as the gospel writer Luke explains, Jesus did this out of compassion for the widow. Jesus goes up to the widow, who is now not only a widow, but with the death of her only son is now left childless with no one to take care of her as she grows old. Which downgrades her status in the community to the lowest rung of society. She will now have to beg and grovel to support herself.

Out of compassion for this woman, Jesus walks up to her and does not just interrupt the procession, but Jesus stops the funeral procession. And then Jesus says to the widow, "Don't cry."

Jesus presence in her life at that moment changes everything, as Jesus tells her son to get up and returns the son to the grieving mother, who will now she have someone who will take care of her in her old age.

Now, we could just leave this story here, as a story of Jesus performing yet another miracle and it would in its own right be an amazing healing story.

But, I think in not delving deeper, we miss what Jesus is revealing to us about the true character of God.

As we see in Jesus' actions God, who does whatever it takes to restore people to wholeness not only physically, but also restoring people to a place of dignity and respect in their community.

And God, who surprises us as God acts in ways that are countercultural. God oversteps

the boundaries and breaks with traditional practices to restore the lives of those who are struggling or grieving or are so desperate that they have given up all hope.

This story reminds me that not only does God see our pain, our grief and our desperation, not only does God understand our pain, but in our darkest hour God steps up into that pain and acts.

And God often acts in ways that are counter to the way that things have always been done. God crosses boundaries, God knocks down barriers, God even breaks the rules to be present with us.

And just as Jesus performed this miracle by raising this young man from the dead, which gave this woman a new lease on life, God calls us as Christ's church to be the miracle workers who through our collective actions give people a new lease on life.

We are often called to play an essential role in restoring dignity and respect for people who are hungry as we host the monthly food pantry; for people who are homeless as we partner with Opportunity House to provide their clients with meals, and for parents who are struggling to care for their young children as we support the ministries of Mary's Shelter.

This story shows us that Jesus was there for people in their darkest hour. Jesus was there when there seemed to be no hope. Jesus was there; doing the unthinkable, breaking the rules, and crossing boundaries. All so that people in need get a second chance.

When we mess up, God gives us a second chance. When we fall down, God reaches out God's hand and reaches out to help us up, then God brushes us off and then God points us in the right direction.

And God will do that over and over again because God never tires of giving us second, a third, a fifth, a fiftieth chance.

And that folks is what we call grace. That giving us chance after chance after chance, although we truly don't deserve it.

God works in mysterious ways, ways we will never in our wildest dreams imagine. But our God is persistent and relentless in God's quest to bring about God's kingdom here on Earth as it is in heaven for ALL people.

No matter what it takes!!

AMEN

### ***Blessing***

May  
The love of God,  
The light of Christ,  
And the joy of the Holy Spirit  
Abide with you on this day  
and forever more.

AMEN