

Victory in Life

Through Jesus' Heart
Through Jesus' Word.

GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOAL! I toned that cry down a little considering our present setting, but even so, I'm guessing you recognize that call. Even if you're not a soccer person, I'm guessing you recognize that call. You hear that and you know what happened. Somebody just scored a goal, right? Somebody is that much closer to winning, right?

And that's what everyone wants, right? To win, right? All week long, at soccer camp we've been talking about winning. Our theme was the "The Cup of Victory" – thinking of the world cup tournament that is going on right now, but even more, of the victory God has given us through Jesus Christ, like those words of Paul we memorized: "**Thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**"

And we learned about great victories God won for his people, giving David success against the giant Goliath because God was bigger and giving Elijah victory against those 450 prophets of Baal, because God was more real than something they could see. Today, our text shows us a victory even greater than either of those: **The Victory of Life**. Our Gospel Lesson for this Sunday and our sermon text is found in Luke, chapter 7. It's printed for you in the bulletin. As I read it, notice this victory goes from the small stuff to the big stuff, from the way God feels about us to what he has done for us. Please rise for the reading of our Gospel Lesson:

Luke 7:11-17 ¹¹ Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹² As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out-- the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

¹⁴ Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶ They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." ¹⁷ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

This is the Gospel of our Lord. You may be seated. What a lucky lady, huh? To happen to have Jesus come upon her son's funeral procession – what a lucky lady! Yes, that was pretty fortunate for her, but I would maintain that there was another pretty fortunate circumstance for her too: Her son died. She got knocked into perspective.

Let me explain: If you've ever seen the fans at a world cup game – if you've seen them celebrating a goal, if you've seen them celebrating a win – you can tell that victory is important to them. And that's fine, right? But when that desire for victory leads to people crushed to death in the crowd, when it leads to brawls when the realization dawns on a fan that both teams don't win, when it leads to players killed for missing a shot or failing to prevent one...there is no victory there. Perspective is skewed.

Now, I'm quite sure that we don't have any world cup fans here that are so serious that they'd do something like that, but I'm also quite sure that we do have plenty of fans of that team

named “self” that have found out that they’d do anything for their team, for what they want. A long enough look in the mirror and at your life and you’ll see like I do, that all too often, my life is a constant chant of “I’m number one” in my thoughts, words, and actions. Yours too. And in so many ways, we stomp on others in how we think of them, what we say about them, even how we treat them. That’s what sin does. It is always selfish. It puts me first and God last as you handle your time, your heart, or your cash. It puts me first and others behind in how you treat each other. It rationalizes and excuses its selfishness, and it all too easily gets horribly out of control.

But then, every once in a while – something happens that has to shake up, has to break up our sin-filled chant of “I’m #1,” that makes us realize that even something as big as a world cup win doesn’t really matter. That’s why I say that this woman in the text is a lucky woman. Her son had just died. Suddenly, those things of this life that had been so important to her weren’t even on her mind, much less controlling her. No longer was she looking for victory in finances, or in prestige; in popularity, or in power. Suddenly, she was refocused on what truly mattered. Lucky lady.

We need that too, because, it’s just so easy to live like it’s the things of this life that are ultimate. So you come here to church, to have this encounter with Jesus that this woman in our text did. And really, there are two parts to it – his heart and his Word.

Studying this text, one word jumped out at me – It’s in verse 13: *evsplagcni, sqh*. You see, that’s a Greek word that is full of a picture. Real literally, it says that his guts were worked up, wrenched, moved. You see, we see problems all the time – but for Jesus, it did something inside. Our misery provokes his pain. That’s what makes this scene such a powerful declaration of the victory of life. Jesus saw this woman in her pain, in her weakness. She didn’t deserve any help. The text seems to indicate that there may not have been any relationship there prior.

And yet, Jesus’ guts were moved. This everyday, common event, this totally natural and deserved occasion... I mean, think about it. You drive past cemeteries all the time and see the flowers, but how often do you shed a tear for those you don’t know?! But Jesus, he had compassion. He felt her pain.

And he does the same for you. That’s where your victory lies. Jesus saw the pain of your sin and its consequences, and his compassion caused him to let more than just his guts get out of whack. He loved you enough to be beaten for your mistakes, pierced for your transgressions, crushed for your iniquities, crucified for your sin. As you see Jesus walk up to this funeral procession in our text, realize that he has done the same for yours. He saw our dead condition – the only possible result for even one of our sins – and his guts were moved. And as Paul wrote, **“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

Think about that. Our relationship with Jesus was worse than just not knowing him. We were fighting against him. And yet, he loved us, just like he did that woman in the text. And he did something about it. Verse 14: **He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!”**

Jesus has the power over death. Jesus’ Word has the power over death. “Young man, I say to you, get up!” He said it, and it happened. And like we learned on Friday, he has said the same thing to us. **“Because I live, you also will live”** he promised.

So Paul asked the question: **“Death, where is your victory?”** Death does not have the victory because Jesus has given us the power of life. That’s a victory. Our sins can not defeat us because Jesus has removed all of them. That’s bigger than any soccer match and Jesus reminds us of that.

He went up to that coffin and used the power of his Word, which is exactly what he is doing here, with us, right here, now. He touches the coffin of our self-serving self-destructive lives and makes us pause a moment to hear what he has to say. And through His word of forgiveness you heard earlier – he gives life. Through his speaking through this book, you are restored. Through His promises in the Lord’s Supper we’ll be celebrating again next week, you are given strength to live, to live a victory, an eternal victory that has benefits even now.

You want a reason to celebrate a goal? You want a reason to cheer? “**Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**” Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus.

Amen.