

**St Botolph's Church Worthing**  
**Trinity Sunday 5 June 2016**  
**Luke 7: 11-17**  
**Father Roger Walker**

Last Sunday we heard of Jesus healing the slave of a Roman Centurion and drew from it a message of obedience, humility and faith. But I also hinted that this week's reading would point us even more clearly to who Jesus was – so – the Jewish Rabbis of Jesus' day taught that God held three keys – the key of the womb, the key of the elements (or weather) – and the key of death.

In other words, no-one but God could bring a person to birth, could change the pattern of the weather and bring back someone from the dead. In Luke Chapters 1 and 2 we hear of Jesus being born of the Virgin Mary: in Luke Chapter 8 we hear of Jesus stilling the storm and today we heard of him bringing a young man back to life.

St Luke includes the three keys in his Gospel narrative, pointing us to who Jesus is – the divine Son of God. With the benefit of 2000 years of Christian teaching, we say 'why ever did people not recognise who Jesus was? It's so obvious from what he did'. But, of course, it is not quite the same when someone sees a miraculous event for the first time. The people who were going to the young man's funeral were, St Luke tells us, filled with awe and praised God. After all, they had seen something they could never have imagined happening and they really got it right. 'A great prophet has appeared among us' they cried.

This is a step up from the response to Jesus' healing power, which was 'we have seen remarkable things today' but it fell far short of acknowledging him as the Son of God. Some of the bystanders did recognise that here was one of the divine keys being used, 'God has come to help his people' they said. But there is still a step from this to seeing Jesus as a divine being.

I wonder how many of the mourners looked back to this day after they heard of the resurrection: another use of God's key of death. How many looked back and said 'Ah, yes, of course, why didn't we see then who Jesus was?' Probably not as many as you would think, for we human beings are remarkably unwilling to see God at work in his world, and this brings us to what God may be saying to us through this Reading today.

God does so many things in His world – great and small – that we can fail to recognise. If we look at great things we can see the awful wars of the last century and the dreadful natural disasters we have witnessed more recently as fulfilments of Jesus' prophecy about the events that would precede his second coming. 'Wars and rumours of wars – nation rising against nation – earthquakes and famines' All foretold by Jesus as the beginning of the birth pains of a new age.

So looking at some of the great things of which we should be aware – and prepared for – the fact that Jesus will come again. But also among great

things must surely be reckoned the amazing collapse of Soviet communism and the restoration of Christian faith across Eastern Europe and Russia. Who knows also whether the huge movement of peoples at the moment – what we call the ‘refugee crisis’ may not prove, as we look back, to be something that God is doing? Rather like the great migration of people around 1500 BC that included the Children of Israel coming out of Egypt into the Promised Land. We are just caught up in the great things that God does: how we respond to them is less important than our response to the small things God does.

We can all look back and see how something we thought was disastrous or irrelevant in our own lives was, in fact, God acting and seeking to change us. We know there are times when we did change and others where we failed to do so. As we become more mature in our Christian faith, one of the things we should be doing is cultivating an awareness that God will act in our lives. We should look prayerfully at family events, at small unexpected happenings – even at quarrels and disagreements – to see if, through them, God is seeking to tell us something about the way he wants us to live our lives. Responding to God’s actions helps us to grow as Christians, and we should develop the habit of looking at everything that happens to us, and asking ‘is God in this?’

I don’t suppose any of us will ever see a dead man brought back to life, but in so many smaller ways God is acting among us. Our lives, the lives of our families and the life of our Church will be more in accordance with his will if we can say ‘This is what God is doing and what he wants.’

AMEN

Father Roger Walker

5.6.16