

In a few moments we will sing and smile and rejoice together as we celebrate a funeral procession.

Newly baptized Gavin Wark will be paraded around the sanctuary, welcomed into his death with Christ...and therefore his new life with us.

Do you not know, Saint Paul insistently asks, that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?

Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Baptism is drowning; it is toxic water for the sinful and self-centered and susceptible, a mercy killing of all the old, tired, empty, miserable ways of a fallen humanity.

We celebrate this death because we know it leads to a raised humanity, touched by Christ with power for new life, power not only to stand but to stand with widows and to stand for what is right and to stand in the company of those courageous enough to kneel.

Our funeral procession is a joyful parade.

It was not so in Nain.

Jesus wasn't present yet, as he is with us, so the funeral procession there was somber, especially given the circumstances.

The man was too young, and his mother a widow.

It was in truth a triple funeral: his funeral, but also his father's funeral played out all over again, and really, it was his mother's funeral too.

As a childless widow, she was as good as dead.

There would be no one to care for her, and the patriarchal legal and cultural system would not permit her the power to care for herself.

She who marched to her son's grave was really also marching to her own.

Those in the crowd marching with her would soon disperse and go on with their lives, leaving her alone to go on with her death.

This funeral procession was a heartbreakingly sad parade.

When it reached the gate, the edge of the town, this crowded death march was confronted by a crowded life march.

As the people of Nain were going out, the crowd following Jesus was coming in.

They were buzzing with fresh excitement as Jesus had just healed a centurion's slave on the brink of death.

Now, at the brink of town, two parades meet, one marching out with orange window stickers and long faces, the other marching in with banners and flags and the music cranked up.

In Chicago, of course, the funeral procession would have the right of way.

Faced with the choice, we always give priority to the dead over the living, maybe because they are so much easier to manage.

In Nain, however, the insensitive march of life does not yield.

Both parades stop, and in the awkward impasse, the Lord sees the widow and has compassion for her.

That is our story too, of course.

The Lord sees all of us on our own triple death marches and has compassion.
The Lord sees mother earth careening toward tragedy and has compassion.
The Lord sees this world hemorrhaging with pain and violence and injustice and death and despair and has compassion.
And so today the Lord touches Gavin Wark and says to him, *Young man, I say to you, rise.*
The Lord touches the church in baptism and bread and word and wine and says, *repent,* which is a Greek word meaning, *Turn this parade around.*
March in the other direction.
March back into town.
March from death into life.

Christ's relentless march of life flows into our community this morning again, disrupting us again with new possibility.
Nine new members, including Gavin and his parents, are God's gifts to us this morning, saints at our gate who come marching in.
We say to them "Welcome to Resurrection," not just because it is our community's name, but also our calling.
Resurrection is a delicious form of repentance, a word that means "turn this parade around" specifically from procession of death into dance of life.
New members, you are joining a community practiced in the art of reversing the sad, familiar flow and turning the parade around.
Resurrection turned danger for latchkey school children into the wondrous social and educational opportunities of RAP.
Resurrection turned too few people and too much property into a Mission Endowment Fund that sends money out to live rather than keeping it in to shrivel and disappear.
Resurrection turned from obsession about what happens inside these walls to outreach to our neighborhood, leading us to a huge summer street festival that spills over with life.
Resurrection turned a roof replacement into a statement of faith, placing solar panels on that roof to slow the funeral procession for mother earth and financing that roof with the Mission Investment Fund of the ELCA, which turns around the interest earned on our loan to build new congregations, new capital expansions for growing faith communities, new life in God's wider church.
Resurrection turned a stewardship crisis of withholding offerings from the wider church into deeper engagement and a higher offering percentage while at the same time powerfully challenging a homophobic church denying leadership to persons of certain sexual orientations to turn that sad parade around.
Resurrection still challenges the wider church, whose average age is going up and whose attendance is going down, by being a community where both those trends are joyfully marching the other way.
I hope Resurrection can take our upcoming capital campaign and vision plan, which can so often devolve into self-centered, us-first parades that deny the marvelous murder of baptism, into occasions to march Christ's new life into a world overrun with despair and death, and I trust all of you to help make sure that happens.
Because Jesus doesn't raise us, or Gavin, or the man from Nain simply for our own sakes.
As soon as the man sat up, Jesus gave him to his widowed mother.

And Jesus raises us in order to give us away too, to the world upon which he looks with
compassion, a world that needs a care so deep and enduring that only we have love
enough to give it.

Gavin, child of God...Resurrection, community of God, the Lord has come to the edge of your
town, your pall and your parade.

The Lord has seen the sadness around you and has compassion.

So now the Lord looks at us and says it again:

I say to you, rise!