

## Sermon for Proper 5 Year C

[RCL] 1 Kings 17:17-24; Psalm 30; Galatians 1:11-24; Luke 7:11-17

Today, we continue our journey in “ordinary time.” Sounds rather boring when you say it like that, but the term “ordinary” does not mean common or plain or boring, but rather it comes from the term ordinal which means “numbered.” These are the numbered weeks of the church year outside of the major feasts and the seasons that surround them – like Advent and Christmas, Lent and Easter. Ordinary time, or the Sundays after Pentecost, are the Sundays in which we focus on various aspects of faith and life in the world as a people of God.

Sometimes when we refer to this time in the liturgical calendar, it is spoken of as the long, boring season in which nothing happens. In a way that is true because we don’t have a major feast like Christmas or Easter, but if you look at what happens during this ordinary time, you will see that the Scripture and scheme of the lessons want it to be something much more than ordinary and boring.

The color for Ordinary time is green – a color associated with new life and growth. This is sometimes referred to as the “green growing season”. It is the green, growing season not only because of the liturgical color or because it begins in the summer months when things are growing and thriving. It is the green, growing season because this is the season that gives us the room to breathe, to explore, to learn more about Jesus and his teachings and to find where they intersects with our own lives. This season after Pentecost focuses on the mission of the church in the world and its responsibility in carrying on the work that Jesus gave us to do.

Sojourner’s Magazine tells us:

“There’s nothing ordinary about what’s known in the lectionary as ‘ordinary time.’ Not Christmas, not Easter, not Pentecost, but the everyday miracles of God with us, of life on earth. Ordinary time is the time when we try to understand and live the teachings of Jesus. Nothing ordinary about that – a lifetime worth of challenges instead.”<sup>i</sup>

We have a great set of lessons to start off this time of growth, new life, new perspectives and change. The readings for today only come around every so often because of how the liturgical calendar works and I believe that they have a lot to offer us as we begin this journey into ordinary time; into the green, growing time.

In our Gospel lesson today from Luke and in our Old Testament lesson from 1 Kings, we hear of people being healed. These are miraculous stories that are wonderful to hear, and they leave us in amazement. We too often hear stories like these and think that they are great stories, but that they have nothing to do with us. I mean, we can’t raise people from the dead, can we? We cannot simply say that these are inspirational stories and leave it at that. Jesus did not come to earth and become one of us so that we could be inspired, but came to earth as one of us so that we could learn from him and change the world around us into the Kingdom of God. Jesus is constantly reminding the people around him that they are called to live as he lived. It is not only Jesus who

is reminding them to live as he lived, but also the Torah called them to follow and live in this way. Thus, we too are called to live as Jesus did.

Our Baptismal Covenant reminds us time and again that we are to live as Jesus did, that we are to be a people of God to everyone around us. It doesn't matter if we can't raise people from the dead like he and Elijah did, because we can do other things in this world that are just as important. We are called to be vehicles of God's grace, love, and peace in the world around us. As we are reminded in our Baptismal Covenant we are to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers, we are to persevere in resisting evil, and whenever we fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord, we are to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ, we are to seek and serve all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself, we are to strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

Our life mission is described in the words of the Baptismal Covenant and we see them being enacted today in the Gospel lesson. Jesus comes upon a woman who is in deep grief over her son's death, her husband's death, and the fact that she is alone in the world. He does not pass her by thinking that there is nothing that he can do for her, but rather he stops – he stops the funeral procession – and acts out of compassion. He tells her not to weep, not in the way that someone would tell us to stop weeping if they were uncomfortable with it, but in a way that tells her that he will take care of her and show her great care and compassion. In raising her dead son to life, he completely changes the outlook for this woman. She once again has social standing in the community, she once again has a family, she has what she had lost.

Jesus' great love for this woman is just a glimpse of the love Jesus has for each of us. After Jesus gives this mother her son, the people say, "God has looked favorably on his people." Those words are also heard in Mary's song, the Magnificat and Simeon's song, the Nunc dimittis. God looks with favor on God's people. It is all throughout scriptures and it is all throughout our lives. No, our lives are not one happy, hunky-dory moment; but our lives are enriched with those around us and they are brought to fullness and grace through God. Yes, there will be difficulties in our lives, yes we will suffer hardships, there will be war and violence and oppression around us AND it is our duty as people of God to serve in a way, to live in a way as to help stop these horrible things from happening and continuing to happen. God looks with favor on us, God looks with love on us, God looks with grace and unconditional caring upon all of us. It is then our job as people of God to turn and do the same.

There are times in all of our lives when we wonder where God is. How could God be letting this happen? Why didn't God come and save the day and perform a miracle like it happens in the Bible? Where is God in those moments? God is with us. In our moments of pain and suffering and aloneness, God is there in the people who are around us, God is there in that compassionate card or phone call. God is there in the offerings of help, the hugs, and the people who will sit with us as we journey into the depths of our lives. God does not promise that life will be easy. God *does* promise to be there and to look with favor on us. God is a God of compassion and caring, of peace and justice, of love and grace. We, by our Baptismal Covenant and through scriptures are called to be conduits of God in the world through our actions, through our words, and through our very being.

*The Practice of Presence*, is a book about Brother Lawrence, a Carmelite monk who lived in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. People are fascinated, mystified and intrigued by this man because he simply lived every moment with God and lived every moment acting out of God's presence in his life. He was assigned to work in the kitchen of the monastery, not anything that he was particularly good at, but did it with faithfulness and with a mind toward God. There was not anything that was beneath him because there was no task that was too mundane or routine as each thing was a medium for God's love. For him, it was not about how sacred or important the task, but more about the motivation behind the task.

As people of God, we are all called to see our tasks as part of our life with God. Mowing the lawn, taking care of our children, driving people to and fro, cleaning, helping, being with others... I could go on and on. Our everyday lives are full of moments with God, it is up to us to remind ourselves and those around us that God is in those moments, just as much as God is in other moments. Who we are, how we act, how we treat others... this is how we are God in the world.

So, in this ordinary time, as we continue to explore where God is calling us to grow, where God is calling us to serve in the world, know that it may be in the everyday, it may simply be in our actions and in our words that we will best serve God. Keep the words of the Baptismal Covenant in mind as a directive and know that God is with you in all that you do.

*Written by The Rev. Shannon Ferguson Kelly*

*The Rev. Shannon Kelly serves as the Missioner for Young Adult and Campus Ministries for The Episcopal Church. She wrote and edited God of My Heart a book of prayers written by youth, for youth. She lives in on Cape Cod with her husband, The Rev. Dr. Thomas Ferguson, rector of St. John's Episcopal Church, their son, and dog.*

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<sup>i</sup> Jim and Shelley Douglass, Sojourners, July 1996.

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