

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle  
Memorial Homily – Joshua Wattman  
5 September 2014  
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita  
1 Kings 17:17-24

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*

*“What have you against me, O man of God?” (1 Ki 17:18)*

That’s the cry of a mother whose son has just died.  
It’s the cry of fear, of confusion, and of deep anger.  
She’s angry with the prophet Elijah—or so it seems.  
But she knows it’s not really him she’s mad at, but God.  
And Elijah knows it too:

*“he cried to the Lord,  
‘O Lord my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn,  
by killing her son?’” (17:20)*

It’s God’s fault.

As we know also from Job,

*“The Lord gives and the Lord takes away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21)*

Death isn’t some mysterious power or rival god.  
And Cancer isn’t his Chief Master Sergeant—though in this life it often seems that way.  
Death isn’t our enemy, nor is Satan, for what it’s worth.  
Our true enemy in this life is God Himself.  
He is the Judge, the Creator and the Redeemer, who holds all of life (and death) in His hand.

We can deny this all we want—trying to get God off the hook (as if He needed our defense).  
We can come up with all sorts of pious things to say, like:

*God never intended this...  
Or, life just isn’t fair...  
Or, this is just what happens in a sinful and broken world.*

While some of that might be true, what comfort is there?  
Someone’s got to be blamed for this.  
It’s not right. It’s not good.  
And none of us should stand by the body of a dead 26-year-old and pretend like it’s okay.

So take up the words of the woman in our Old Testament reading today:

*“What have you against me?”*

And take up the prophet’s words,

*“Have you brought calamity by killing her son?”*

And then run to the Psalms and cry out,

*“How long, O Lord? Will You be angry forever?” (Ps 13:1)*

Put the blame on God and at least let Him be God. He can take it.  
He can take your anger and confusion and sadness and fear.  
He can take your pain and brokenness—even your depression and despair.  
He can and He does.

In fact, He did: on the cross.

There He took everything that's broken and wrong with this terrible world,  
and everything broken and wrong with you,  
and let it all die in His Son, Jesus Christ *for you*.

Now, when the women cried out in anger against the prophet Elijah,  
Elijah took that complaint to where it needed to go: to God Himself.

And then, as the prophet of the Lord—the one who delivers the verdict of heaven—  
*“Elijah took [the child] from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where  
he lodged, and laid him on his own bed...and stretched himself upon the child three times  
and cried to the Lord,  
‘O Lord my God, let this child’s life come into him again.’”* (17:19, 21)  
*“And the Lord listened to the voice of Elijah.”* (17:22)

Now, Elijah isn't here to stretch himself over Joshua three times.  
But that's okay; Joshua has something even better—and so do you.  
Joshua already had something else poured over him three times:  
the water of Holy Baptism, and the name of the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

There, at his Baptism, Joshua already received both death and resurrection.  
You see, this is better than what the woman's son received in the Old Testament—  
for even though he was brought back to life, he had to die again.

But Joshua, though he died, yet shall he live—that's the verdict of heaven!  
For He is baptized.  
And as the baptized he is as good as the Lord has said he is.  
For Baptism is the place where God calls us His beloved Son.  
In Baptism He unites us to Christ—to His death and resurrection (as the service began by saying).

It's not a light thing.  
It's not just some formality for membership or something to check off your list.  
Baptism is having our Lord speak a word of promise over you that cannot be changed;  
a verdict that can't run out, that delivers what it says.

And Joshua is baptized.  
That's your comfort, Dawn and Walt.  
There's your hope and rock of salvation.  
In all your anger and confusion and fear and sadness—  
do not look at what could've been or might've been or even should've been—  
look to Christ, who has joined Himself to Joshua and all the baptized.

And be in the Church—for this is the place where the Heavenly verdict is spoken on earth.  
What goes for Christ goes for the Baptized; there alone are we children of the Heavenly Father.  
And then nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit*