

Sermon for October 5th, 2025
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

READINGS

1 Kings 17:17-24

17 After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill. And his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. **18** And she said to Elijah, “What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to cause the death of my son!” **19** And he said to her, “Give me your son.” And he took him from her arms and carried him up into the upper chamber where he lodged, and laid him on his own bed. **20** And 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?” **21** Then he 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.” **22** And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. **23** And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, “See, your son lives.” **24** And the woman said to Elijah, “Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”

Psalms 30

1 I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.
2 O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.
3 O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.
4 Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.
5 For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.
6 As for me, I said in my prosperity,
“I shall never be moved.”
7 By your favor, O LORD,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face;
I was dismayed.
8 To you, O LORD, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
9 “What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?”

10 Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!
O LORD, be my helper!”

11 You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,

12 that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, **16** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Luke 7:11-17

11 Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. **12** As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. **13** And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” **14** Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” **15** And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. **16** Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and “God has visited his people!” **17** And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

Our text for meditation this Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity is on our Epistle reading.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Over the past twenty years or so, strength training and athletics have become far more mainstream than it once was. More men have been seeking to attain athletic capability and better-looking physiques than ever before. Barbells, kettlebells, calisthenics, martial arts, climbing, running, swimming, hiking, all of these and more have reached a zenith of popularity. Along with it comes popular supplements: protein powders, nutrition bars, “pre-workout” shakes, vitamin candies. Along with those comes the instructionals: classes, workout plans, books, online articles, motivational videos, and announcements for competitions. Whereas fitness was once a special interest among very few, it is now a world-spanning industry that circulates hundreds of billions of dollars every year.

On the one hand this is fantastic. Despite all the articles bemoaning obesity rates all over the world, It is safe to say that there are more healthy people than ever before. This is a *good* thing, because to be in shape means being able to love your neighbor more readily when they need help moving furniture, being carried to the hospital, getting protection from threats, or even carrying groceries. A

young man helping his grandmother, a mother playing with her children, and so many more things that exercise enables means that we can better glorify God by serving others in our vocations.

But there is a great price to be paid with this trend of physical culture. Now things are getting *competitive*, to the point where looking a certain way or hitting certain numbers is surpassing any previous emphasis on being healthy. Sinful vanity abounds, with multitudes of people sacrificing their old age in service of their youth. A rising number of young men doing steroids to feel more confident about their bodies (one study showed that *half* the gymgoers are using in Iran alone).¹ There are too many young women trying to maximize their looks with lip fillers and surgery instead of diet and exercise. Sinful greed and deception gets mixed in, with businesses touting various dubious claims regarding what works and what doesn't. Sinful pride and fits of wrath have crept in, as drama between competing influencers leads to all sorts of time-wasting arguments and sometimes violence. When St. Paul says that bodily exercise is of "some" or limited value,² I believe he had these potential pitfalls in mind; while it is good to exercise, we must be careful to not fall into such traps ourselves.

Christian Strength

But did you know that there is a kind of strength which does not have any of this sin problem attached to it? And it is so important that the Apostle St. Paul says that he prays on his knees that the Ephesian congregation would all have it. It is a strength which is so important that a Christian cannot go without it, and with it the Church conquers much of the world.

It is a kind of spiritual strengthening, one which can only be described in terms of growth. A human being is born weak, being unable to stand, walk or eat by itself. But over time that infant grows in a strength that requires little to no training; he becomes able to support himself on all fours, then he can crawl, then he can stand, then he can walk. Teeth begin to grow at the same time as a kind of curious hunger that draws him away from his mother's breast and toward other kinds of foods. His mind grows as he takes in the sights, sounds, tastes, smells and feels around him. Before you know it, what was once a powerless infant is now a young man who possesses great capabilities, able to navigate the challenges of the world.

So it is with Christian strength. When we are Baptized we are born anew, and spiritually we are weak. We can only just barely cooperate with the Holy Spirit's guidance, and just barely listen to the Word. But by the Grace of God, over time we grow into our faith. Christ dwells in our hearts and minds and we hear Him more easily. We find ourselves caring about others for their own sake, seeking nothing in return as we have a new foundation in Christian love. We find ourselves able to make right decisions and to remember good doctrine, not because we have a bunch of dogmatic information in our heads, but because our souls are made capable the same way a young man is made capable by a lifetime of being raised by his father.

Free Strength

This strength is only granted by God Almighty. You cannot get it by fasting. You cannot get it by refusing sleep, engaging in night vigils, following the seven hours, going to Church four times a week, or anything of the sort. Any man could inject some anabolic steroids and increase the size of his muscles or put extra weight on a barbell;³ *Christian* strength, on the other hand, cannot be obtained by *your* effort. It is a function of Grace alone.

Thankfully, God is abundantly *giving* by nature. He is our Heavenly Father, not our Heavenly *miser*: He shall not refuse you if you ask. Those who earnestly wait on Him shall receive this strengthening which makes all things possible. St. Paul's prayer is answered whenever a Christian gladly hears the Word, whenever he spends time with God in prayer and receives what God offers by

1 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10938795/>

2 1 Timothy 4:8

3 For anyone reading this, please do not do this – performance enhancing drugs will destroy your health.

faith. When believers are *sanctified*, they are made stronger in the love of Christ and the knowledge of God. To receive this gift, all you have to do is open your heart to God and patiently wait for His provision.

It is this strength that gave the martyrs the ability to stand firm in the face of pagan threats. In 2015, when twenty-one Christian men were told by islamic militants that they would die if they did not recant their faith, this very strength from God kept them firm in their confession that Jesus is the Christ. The knives went to their throats, but they did not submit to primal human fear, and now they are in Heaven with our Lord.⁴ On the flip side, it is this spiritual strength that gave the Christian armies under Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain the bravery they needed to reconquer their homelands away from the wicked caliphate that held it for centuries.

It is this very same empowering, which only comes from God, which comes to you beloved. With it you can conquer lands, love your enemies, cast out demons, save the poor, help those in need and danger alike. Being rooted in love and given power by the Spirit you can wage war against your own sin while lifting others up to your level. God shall use this to preserve your soul should you ever come under the threat of a pagan knife to your throat, but He also gives us the grace to make it through the crushing grind of modernity with its daily battle for holiness. It is this enabling which we must covet, and by His love for us He offers it freely. Shall you believe and be made greater than you are?

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

4 For a recounting of this incident, watch this: <https://youtu.be/XwPQqkeeCTg>