

MORE ABOUT JESUS
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10th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church

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The Gulf of Mexico is a mess and getting messier by the minute. Where's Jesus when we really need him? Where's the One who walked on water, turned water into wine, and calmed roiling seas and winds? Where's the One who raised the dead?

Where's Jesus?

I believe we've seen him. We've seen him along the Gulf coast dying for the sins of the world.

Not Jesus of Nazareth, of course, but the One who arose over eons of time through every phase of the unfolding universe; arose through light, stardust, protozoan, sea and soil to be part of our humanity. From the beginning this risen and rising One has been luring all creation toward higher consciousness and freedom, greater complexity, greater communion with God and greater community with others.

Where's Jesus today? I believe we've seen him. We've seen him along the Gulf coast dying for the sins of the world.

We've seen him weeping for dead and dying creatures, stooping to lift up the soiled and oiled.

We've seen him swear that death and hopelessness will not have the final word. We've seen him stop the procession of death in its tracks.

*Soon afterwards Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen among us!" and "God has looked favorably on his people!" This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country. **Luke 7:11-17***

This word about him spread throughout the world.

What word? After all, millions upon millions of words about Jesus have spread throughout the world. But, as the gospel lesson puts it, *this* word—which we could take to be a *certain* word—spread. And what word would that be? I'm guessing *compassion*. For we are told, when the Lord saw the grief stricken widow, he had compassion for her.

To be compassionate is to stand in another's shoes. To be compassionate is to feel the wounds and rage of another. All religious traditions agree: in the presence of such compassion miracles of one sort or another happen. Always have; always will.

There's more, much more that could be said about Jesus. But for this morning let this be enough. *He had compassion.*

As the old hymn, "Love Divine," puts it: *Jesus, Thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art.*

In our tradition "Jesus Christ" serves as the icon of love and compassion. Such love, as it

turns out, is heaven's finest gift. According to the 4th century hymn "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" (the Liturgy of St. James), which we are about to sing, nothing is more worthy of our adoration. As the light of light, it descends into our hearts from the realms of endless day that the powers of hell may vanish. It's enough to stop our tongues and demand nothing but our full homage.

Yes, there's more to Jesus than compassion. But, when all is said and done, the heart of Jesus is compassion. And let's not forget: Jesus is the heart of the tradition in which we stand and in which we commune.