

Sermon Preached at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Comforter
2701 Park Road, Charlotte, NC 28209
The Second Sunday after Pentecost, June 6, 2010
Year C, Proper 5 RCL [1 Kings 17:8-16 (17-24); Luke 7:11-17]
The Reverend Scot McComas, Interim Supply Priest

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I don't know about you, but I've been a little teary today. I don't know about you, but today I feel a little different than I normally would on a Sunday. I don't know about you but I feel a little empty. I don't know about you but I feel as if there should be someone sitting in that chair—the deacon's stall—smiling, nodding, frowning sometimes as Carter Lofton did. I'm not ready to let him go. I'm not ready to let go of a friend, a colleague, a fellow member of the Charlotte clergy. I'm not ready to let go of a “deacon's deacon.” I'm not ready to let go of someone who reminded this priest that we must always look after the hungry, the poor, the sick, the needy. And I only “had him” for seven years. Some of you had him for the fifteen years he served as a deacon at Holy Comforter. Some of you had him for much longer—30, 40, 50 years. Some of you had him your whole life. Our friend is gone; we are sad; we mourn; we miss him.

Yet we know despite ill-health the last year or so, in and out of the hospital twelve times in twelve months, Carter is no longer a prisoner in his own body. He no longer is dealing with heart monitors, stints, EKGs. He is free of his worldly body and is waiting for us in the next life—a place Jesus told us about—a place where we will have Eternal Life—a place where there is no pain or grief or crying—a place where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

If we are not reminded of death by Carter's death last Saturday, we are reminded of it today in the Old Testament and Gospel readings. Unlike these two stories where the sons are restored to life by Elijah and Jesus, we cannot bring Carter back. But we can carry on his legacy, as Father John Shields so eloquently reminded us in his homily at Carter's funeral Wednesday. We can carry on Carter's drive and focus in our own lives and at this church—a desire, like Christ, to help others; a drive to do something good, not just to talk about it but to do it.

Carter was a man who actually believed that one person could make a difference. Carter was someone who made true what Frederick Buechner wrote, “The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.” There is plenty of hunger, plenty of need, plenty of hurt. How can you—how can we as a church—carry on Carter's legacy and find “the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet”?

We don't do a very good job of talking about death in North America. If you're like me from a Northern European extraction, specifically Scottish and

English, we don't handle death very well. In contrast, those in Southern Europe, places like Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Greece deal with death much better. They let out their emotions—they don't keep them bottled up inside. In fact, did you know that in Greece there are professional wailers hired to attend funerals? They wail so that others can feel comfortable enough to grieve and cry and let out all that is inside.

We need to cry; we need to let it out. If we don't, it bottles up inside and can cause cancer, heart disease, alcoholism, or any other "isms." It is healthy to cry to let the tears come out as the enzymes in the tears are so healing. We hear the phrase, "have a good cry." It is healthy to cry.

When we talk about death in our society, "In essence, the Classical Greek view is deterministic and based on a tragic vision of [humankind]; [but] the Biblical view is intrinsically positive, open to the possibility of change and transformation. Biblical psychology empowers the person, instilling the idea that life is hopeful..." [*Synthesis: An Episcopal Lectionary Study Guide*, June 6, 2010, Proper 5, Year C]

We cannot escape death; it is an inevitable part of life. As a Persian proverb puts it, "Death is a camel that lies down at every door." [*Synthesis: An Episcopal Lectionary Study Guide*, June 6, 2010, Proper 5, Year C] But death is not the end, it is just the beginning. Our faith is always hopeful; it always allows for change and transformation. It is not about the Crucifixion, but about the Resurrection; it is not about the Cross but about the Empty Tomb; it is not about death, but life eternal.

Until then, until we see our Lord face to face, find "the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." And "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope," (Romans 15:13) and continue the works of Jesus Christ and Carter Lofton. Amen.