



THE MISSION OF SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

Father Alan's Blog

For the Sixteenth Sunday After Trinity - September 19, 2021

"Jesus said, 'Young man, I say to you, get up!'"

St. Luke 7:14 (NIV)

On the morning of his 42nd birthday, Grabwell Grommet awoke to a peal of particularly ominous thunder. Glancing out the window with his bleary eyes, he saw written in fiery red letters across the sky:

"SOMEONE IS TRYING TO KILL YOU, GRABWELL GROMMET!"

With shaking hands, Grabwell lit his first cigarette of the day. He didn't question the message. You don't question messages like THAT. His only question was:

"Who?"

At breakfast, as he salted his fried eggs and buttered his toast, he told his wife, Greta:

"Someone's trying to kill me."

"Who?!?"

Greta gasped with horror.

Grabwell slowly stirred the cream and sugar into his coffee, shook his

head, and said:

"I don't know."

Convinced though he was, Grabwell Grommet wasn't going to the police with his story; instead, he decided his only course was to go about his daily routine and hope, somehow, to outwit his would-be murderer. Grabwell tried to think on the drive to the office, but the frustration of making time by beating traffic lights and by constantly switching lanes occupied him wholly. Nor, once behind his desk, could he think a moment – what with jangling phones, urgent memos, and the problems and decisions piling in as they did each day. In fact, it wasn't until his third martini at lunch that the full terror of his position struck him. It was all he could do to finish his second plate of Fettuccine Alfredo.

"I can't panic,"

He said to himself as he lit another cigar,

"I simply must live my life as usual."

So, Grabwell worked until seven, as usual, and drove home fast, as usual, and studied business reports, as usual. Then, he took his usual two sleeping pills in order to get his usual five hours of sleep.

As days passed, Grabwell stuck fully to his routine. And as the months went by, he began to take a perverse pleasure in his ability to survive.

"Whoever's trying to get me,"

He'd say proudly to Greta,

"Hasn't got me yet – I'm too smart for him."

"Oh, please be careful."

She'd reply, while ladling him a second helping of beef stroganoff.

Grabwell's pride grew, as he managed to go on living for years. But, as it must to all men, death came at last to Grabwell Grommet – at his desk, on a particularly busy day, when he was 53. Grief-stricken Greta subsequently demanded a full autopsy, but it revealed only:

- ✕ obesity;
- ✕ cirrhosis of the liver;
- ✕ arteriosclerosis;
- ✕ cardiac necrosis;
- ✕ circulatory insufficiency;
- ✕ cerebrovascular aneurysm;
- ✕ duodenal ulcers;
- ✕ emphysema;
- ✕ pulmonary edema; and
- ✕ a touch of lung cancer.

"How glad Grabwell would have been to know,"

Said Greta, smiling proudly through her tears,

"That he died of NATURAL CAUSES..."



Now, it's very important that we do all we can to take care of these temporal bodies, these vessels of flesh and blood that God has given us to carry us through our earthly journeys. Indeed, as St. Paul cautions us (1 Corinthians 6:19-20):

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, Who

is in you, Whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body."

And so, we are called to spend a great deal of our time caring for our physical and emotional selves. Some of us spend more time than others. For example, out of the 168 hours in each week, I wonder just how many hours we actually spend:

- ✓ **sleeping;**
- ✓ **exercising;**
- ✓ **showering (or bathing);**
- ✓ **primping;**
- ✓ **shopping for groceries and such;**
- ✓ **preparing meals; and**
- ✓ **eating.**

I'll bet that it's a pretty high proportion of the total. **Yet, these bodies of ours WILL give out – they will die, eventually.** So, what will all that time spent have gained us? Outside of an improved quality of life, as the psalmist notes (Psalm 90:10a):

"... (for) threescore years and ten or if men be so strong, they may come to fourscore years..."

The point is this:

For a paltry 70- or 80-years' return on our "investment", we do seem to spend an awful lot of our time concentrating on:

- ☞ **the physical; and**
- ☞ **the emotional,**

but what about:

† the spiritual?

In other words, how much of the 168 hours each week do we actually spend in preparing for ETERNITY:

- ✚ in worship;
- ✚ in prayer;
- ✚ in reading and studying Holy Scripture; and
- ✚ in fellowship?

☞ **And just how long is ETERNITY anyway?**



On the first page of his 1921 illustrated book, *“The Story of Mankind”*, Dutch-American historian, journalist, and children’s book author Hendrik Willem van Loon offers the following illustration:

“High up in the North in the land called Svithjod, there stands a rock. It is a hundred miles high and a hundred miles wide. Once every thousand years a little bird comes to this rock to sharpen its beak.

When the rock has thus been worn away, then a single day of eternity will have gone by.”



So again, I ask: **just how much of our time do we actually spend in preparing for ETERNITY?** I’ll bet it’s not very much – especially when one considers the enormous return on ITS “investment”.

And so, I’ve really got to know:

“Is it just me – or is something SERIOUSLY WRONG with this entire picture?!?”,

that so many people would choose to put in so much effort for so little return and choose to let the most important priorities slide?



You know, whenever our family does yard work – such as:

- ✓ **shovelling and wheelbarrowing gravel and topsoil;**
- ✓ **raking;**
- ✓ **planting;**
- ✓ **watering;**
- ✓ **mowing;**
- ✓ **trimming;**
- ✓ **pruning;**
- ✓ **the ever-constant weeding;**
- ✓ **harvesting; and, of course,**
- ✓ **yard and garden clean-up in the spring and autumn,**

it never ceases to amaze me just how quickly a plant will shrivel up and die when it is cut off from its root. In fact, the withering process is alarmingly fast – it literally happens before one’s very eyes in a matter of minutes. Well, the same is true with us – whenever we human beings, God’s children all, are cut off from our root, the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For as Jesus Himself clearly declares in St. John 15:5:






“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

Thus, if we **willingly choose** to be cut off from Jesus – by neglecting our spiritual and, subsequently, our ETERNAL needs – then our souls will, as a result, shrivel up and, in effect, die for 70 years (or more) in this life, **and for an EXTREMELY LONG TIME in the next.**

But God be praised! Because as we distinctly heard in today's Gospel Lesson (St. Luke 7:11-17):

 **Jesus Christ has absolute power over death!**

In this instance, Jesus raises to new life the son of a widow who lived in Nain – a small Galilean village about eight miles south of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. No doubt, we can easily picture this incident (or, at least, feel the emotion of it) because, chances are, we have all lost someone to death – not necessarily an only son (as did this poor woman) but, perhaps:

-  **a spouse; or**
-  **a parent; or**
-  **a sibling; or**
-  **some other close relative; or**
-  **a dear friend.**

Anyway, I'll leave it to Christian author, Max Lucado, in his 1993 book, "He Still Moves Stones" and his 1987 book, "God Came Near" to describe the scene for us:

"The funeral is over. The burial is next. Ahead of you walk six men who carry the open coffin that carries the body of your son. Your only son.

"You're numb from the sorrow. Stunned. You lost your husband, and now you've lost your son. Now you have no family. If you had any more tears, you'd weep. If you had any more faith, you'd pray. But both are in short supply, so you do neither. You just stare at the back of the wooden box.

"Suddenly it stops. The pallbearers have stopped. You stop.

"A man has stepped in front of the casket. You don't know him.

You've never seen him. He wasn't at the funeral... You have no idea what he is doing."

"The mourners didn't cause Jesus to stop. Nor did the large crowd, or even the body of the dead man on the stretcher. It was one, lone, solitary, figure. The woman. The WIDOW.

"From the look on the woman's face and the redness in her eyes, Jesus knew immediately what was happening - It was her son who was being carried out, her ONLY son. And if anyone knows the pain that comes from losing your only son, God does.

(Moreover, the death of the widow's only son meant that her lone earthly source of "livelihood", meaning:

- ♥ of food;
- ♥ of care;
- ♥ of clothes; and
- ♥ of a home,

WAS NOW GONE. Her son's untimely death meant the widow's abject poverty and, most likely, her premature death.)

"And so, Jesus did it. He went into action for the sake of ONE LOST SOUL. 'Don't cry' He told the mother. 'Arise!' He told the son. The dead man spoke, the devil ran, and the people were reminded of the truth: For those who know the Author of Life, death is nothing more than Satan's game of dead-man's-bluff."



And just as Jesus had compassion on the widow of Nain, raising her son from the dead and saving her from a life of untold hardship and poverty, in the process, so, too **(only if we ask Him to, that is)**, Jesus

will have compassion upon us, resurrecting that which was dead, and saving us from a life of hardship of heart and then replenishing our poverty of spirit, as well. Accordingly, St. Paul makes his petition for us in today's Epistle Lesson (Ephesians 3:16-19):

"I pray that out of (the Father's) glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Thus, if we truly invite the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to dwell in our **hearts**, just imagine what He could do in our individual **lives**.


(Not to mention in the life of:

- † **this Mission of Saint Mary Magdalene; and**
- † **the Diocese of Canada West; and**
- † **the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada; and**
- † **the Traditional Anglican Church worldwide; and**
- † **the "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church", Christ's "Church militant here IN earth".)**

So, when all is said and done, I REALLY need to ask:

 **Just how much of 168 hours a week are we willing to invest in Jesus of Nazareth?**

For as "The Murder of Grabwell Grommet" so clearly demonstrates for us:

 **Life on earth is short - and eternity beckons.**



Dearest Reader in Christ:

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