

**Compassion: God's gift to us, God's gift through us.**

**Hebrew Scriptures:** 1Kings 17: 8-24 **Epistle:** Galatians 1:1-24 **Gospel:**  
Luke 7: 11-17

**Responsive Reading:** Psalm 30

**Summary:** If it were not for God, we would not be here; so, since we are here, let us be here for God.

Compassion is one of the great themes of the Bible and it is a defining characteristic of God. We see God's compassion on Elijah, giving him a safe place to stay, company and food to eat. In a masterpiece of Divine economy, God has compassion on that widow with the same move. Then, God again shows compassion on that widow and her son, granting Elijah the skill, faith, and power to restore life to her boy.

God shows compassion on Paul, restoring his sight, forgiving his acts of persecution and violence, turning his life around and giving him a purpose and mission which will bless many more lives than he has cursed.

Again, God shows compassion on another widow through Jesus, reviving her only son from death so that she can continue to have his love and economic support.

Each of us can add personal witness to these testimonies. In addition to the miracle of my birth itself, I was convicted of my sin and need, brought to faith, nurtured by education and experience, preserved through my heart attack and subsequent infection, and blessed with a man I love who understands me and prays for me.

Each one of you has a narrative like that. Our congregation would not exist if it had not been sustained by God's gift of so many faithful members. Thus, my message this Communion Sunday is very simple: since we cannot stand except by God, let us be encouraged to continue to stand for God. And, since the manner, nature, and substance of how God has been revealed to us is compassion, let this be our vision plan and mission statement.

This is why our welcome is universal and how we can love each other, though we are so different, one from the other. This is why we

stay where we are in confusing and dangerous times. We know we can trust God to be our compassionate parent, and we are determined that God can trust us to be what Rev. Jim always says we are: sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Let's keep on keeping on!