

Here's The Point!

Life Lessons from Mother Lynn

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“Murphy’s Law”

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(Biblical text is II Kings 4.8-37)

When I was in the local gas station the other day, I announced, “This is a *Murphy’s Law* day!” The attendant asked, “What’s that?” I said, “It’s a day when everything that can go wrong -- does.”

Today's Old Testament story is about *Murphy’s Law* and the *power of the Holy Spirit*. There are five characters in the story: Elisha (a 9th century BC itinerant prophet and healer), his servant Gehazi, an unnamed woman from a place called Shunem, her husband and their son. I've condensed the story into five parts.

In Part One, the Shunnamite woman provides food and lodging for Elisha.

In Part Two, the prophet decides to repay her kindness by promising the woman a son. Now, the woman's reaction to Elisha's promise is important. She says, "*Nay, my Lord -- do not deceive thy handmaid -- such a blessing isn't for me.*" But spring comes, the woman conceives, and discovers to her delight that "the blessing is for her."

In Part Three, her faith is sorely tested. The child is now ten and out working in the fields with his dad when tragedy strikes. It's everyone's worst fear. The boy screams, "My head, my head!" and *dies in his mother's arms*. The woman carries the boy home - then hurries to the prophet Elisha, first because he's a healer and second because everyone in Israel knows that when Elisha became a prophet he'd been given *a double dose of the Holy Spirit*. And the Shunammite woman is smart enough and faithful enough to know that her boy *needs* a double dose of the Holy Spirit.

In Part Four, when the woman reaches the prophet, she's greeted by his servant Gehazi, who unwittingly asks her (this is one of the great faux pas) - "How's the family?" Here's her astounding reply: "*It is well.*" It's a great prayer!

When she meets Elisha, the Shunammite woman throws herself down, grabs his feet, and says, "*I'm not letting go until you come and help my son.*"

In the Fifth and final Part, Elisha and the woman are back at the house. Elisha sees the dead child, prays, breathes on him and repeats the procedure. Miraculously, the child sneezes, opens his eyes -- and *It IS well*.

So, is this an old miracle tale that has nothing to do with us in 2009? The obvious answer is no. The resuscitation of the Shunammite woman's son is a coming attraction of what will happen

through *another* son of *another* faithful woman - Jesus, son of Mary. This story is a preview of the Risen Christ's power to deliver us from whatever might hold us down -- *including death*.

Here's the point: *through the Spirit of Jesus, the son of Mary, it IS well for you, for me and for all whom we love.*

And here's the good news: we get a double dose of Christ's Spirit at Baptism and every time we gather in His name. This means that resurrection isn't something that begins at death - we have new life *now*. Even in the middle of a Murphy's Law day!! Forget "double lattes!" Ask for a *double dose of the Holy Spirit* when Murphy's Law strikes you.

Here's a personal example: at the time I was called to the priesthood, I had a recurring dream. I was in a huge house with lots of maze-like rooms. Each room had its own horror that assaulted me. I'd run from room to room -- *each room containing a horror more dreadful than the one which had preceded it*.

As the dream went on and on, my terror increased until it seemed there was no way to escape. No exit. Then *always* when my terror was completely unbearable, out of nowhere -- *purely as gift* -- a thought would occur to me.

Prompted by this graced thought, I'd notice a small bump in the rug. I'd lift the rug up and discover a trap door with a descending ladder. As I descended the ladder, each rung would take me further and further away from the terror.

Finally, I'd find myself in a room filled with dazzling light, radiant color and astonishing flowers. In the room, *God's spirit was as real as the smell of lilacs in the spring air*. I was *flooded with joy and peace*.

My joy was due not only to the glory of the room but also to the realization that I have always had this safe space in me. It's part of my being - a gift from our gracious God. *It's called my soul. You have one too* (St. Theresa calls it "our Interior Castle"). But in my fear I had forgotten it. You may forget sometimes, too. In faith, *the task is to remember*.

And here's what we *must* remember: when we access that safe place in us - our soul - *we receive a double dose of the Holy Spirit - new life, new joy, new peace*. Like the Shunammite woman - when we remember the nearness of the Spirit's healing presence - all IS well.

May it be well with you.

Amen.

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