

Driving a car is one of the most dangerous things you can do. Even if you're the best driver on earth, you are sharing the road with people who are not the best drivers on earth. Last month I had my car parked out here on Benton Boulevard when a southbound Jeep sideswiped it. Six days after I got it back from the body shop, my car was struck again on I-70. A damaged fender from another car flew out the top of a trash truck and hit my front bumper at 65 mph. My car is back now after the second visit to the body shop in a month. I don't like driving. I do it, but I always feel it's the most dangerous thing I do each day. I probably inherited this from my mother. Every time she put the key in the ignition, she said a prayer to her Guardian Angel. We normally pray after something bad happens. Sometimes we pray for prevention - when we know that we or someone we love is entering some peril. We also pray in thanksgiving. After a close call, we thank God that we were rescued. We probably don't pray in thanksgiving often enough.

Psalm 30 is a prayer of thanksgiving. We sang today, "I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me." The person who wrote this psalm probably recovered from a bad illness. When you get sick, you expect compassion. But whoever wrote this psalm had enemies: "I will extol you, O Lord, for you ... did not let my enemies rejoice over me." It's bad enough being near death; it's worse to think that people will be happier when you die. Family and friends are usually disturbed by one's illness. If someone you depend on gets very sick or surgery is required, you start wondering what happens if the results are not good. You envision a future you never wanted to see. Then, if the person recovers, darkness gives way to light. To use images from Psalm 30: anger changes to good will, nightfall changes to dawn, sorrow changes to dancing. "O Lord, you brought me up from the nether world; you preserved me from among those going down into the pit."

We sing this psalm today because both the gospel and the first reading tell stories of young people who had died, and then were mercifully brought back to life, one by Elijah, the other by Jesus. In these cases, God did not rescue during the illness, but after the person died. It's a message Christians hold dear. Sometimes we don't get prayers answered the way we want. We may want a miraculous rescue before death; it may not come. But we believe that Christ offers something more. He has power not just over illness, but also over death. That news can change our sorrow into dancing, our nightfall into dawn. Even through the most dangerous events, Christ constantly offers light and endless rescue.