

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
An In-Home Service of the Word
March 29, 2020



Jesus Raises Lazarus

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
85 E. Brandt Boulevard
Landisville, PA

*United in Christ,
we are called to love and serve.*

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CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, the rock who gave us birth, our light and our salvation. Amen.

Let us acknowledge our sin and seek God's face, that we may live.

Time for reflection.

Holy God, we confess that we have turned away from you and from our neighbors and turned inward toward ourselves. We have sought security in possessions and the place of power in relationships. Turn us outward, O God. Forgive our sins, gather us into your embrace, and teach us the way we should go. Amen.

Receive good news: God turns to you in love and says, "I will put my spirit in you, and you shall live." All your sin is forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ, who is the free and abounding gift of God's grace for you. Amen.

THE GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Living Lord, liberate us from the fear of death and its power, so we may freely live in the life of the Spirit and in obedience to your command, so that, invigorated by the Spirit within us we may accomplish the plans you have for us, all to the glory of your name. Amen.

† THE WORD †

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.” So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act,” says the LORD.

Here ends the first reading.

SECOND READING

Romans 8:6-11

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who

raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Here ends the second reading.

GOSPEL READING

John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her

in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?” Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.” Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

SERMON

Pastor Barbara Caruana

*Friends in Christ,
Grace and peace to you from God our
Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ.
Amen.*

You know, it's really easy to rush past the beginning of today's Gospel story because the end of the story seems so much more fascinating. That's where all the drama is. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. It's true that Jesus has done lots of miracles in the Gospel of John, but this one is breathtaking, unheard of, a remarkable sign of the in-breaking of the eternal, and anticipation of Jesus' own resurrection. No wonder the end of the story attracts so many. It's where the fireworks are.

Every once in a while, though, when we've finished dealing with the Lazarus story, we shift our attention to what Jesus did earlier in the story. Do you remember what he did? Jesus began to weep.

But why? Why did Jesus weep? Was it because he saw others weeping? Was he moved with grief over the death of his friend? Was he anticipating his own death? Well, we don't know! But even though the reason is a mystery, we're still drawn to this picture of an emotionally affected Jesus ... tears falling down his cheeks.

Because the end of the story is so dramatic and the earlier part is so mysterious, it's easy to overlook the beginning. But overlooking the beginning is a big mistake because there's something curious and important going on there.

What's most intriguing is that Jesus is intentionally tardy. He planned his schedule so he'd arrive on the scene late. Jesus waited two days after he heard the news about Lazarus and by the time he finally got to Bethany, Lazarus was dead.

Mary and Martha were less than thrilled with Jesus. In fact, they blamed Jesus for the death of their brother ... "Lord, if you had been here, our brother wouldn't have died."

Now, if we're not careful, our temptation is to judge Jesus harshly. What kind of person would dally around while a friend was dying? What possibly could have kept Jesus where he was while Lazarus, whom he loved dearly, sweated out his last few breaths? What Jesus did seems to be a violation of basic human compassion. Why was Jesus late? Why did he do that?

Well, it seems as though Jesus sometimes saves us by being absent rather than present ... at least not present in the ways we demand or expect. Later in John's Gospel, Jesus tell his disciples that he will soon depart from them. "You will look for me, but where I am going, you cannot come." This announcement causes fear and panic to set in among the disciples. The disciples can't imagine being apart from Jesus. They plead with Jesus about being lost without him; they beg to be allowed to follow him, but Jesus refuses. He clearly intends to be their Lord by being absent from them.

What this means is that Jesus will be obedient to God's will and not theirs. He will accomplish the save work of God, not what those around him think he should do.

Those around Jesus want him to be the leader of their little band, but Jesus is the light of the whole world. The disciples want Jesus to teach them, guide them, heal them, protect

them, and save them. They want him to respond to their immediate concerns, but the mission of Jesus transcends their little world; he's *their* Lord because he's Lord of *all*.

On Sunday morning, July 17, 1966, arguably the most newsworthy worship service in the world was held in St. Peter's Cathedral in Geneva. Christian leaders and reporters from around the world were present. The service had been planned as part of the World Council of Churches Conference on Church and Society, and there was an air of expectation since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was to deliver the sermon. But Dr. King didn't show up. Hymns were sung, prayers prayed, and ecumenical affirmations were spoken, but the pulpit was empty. Dr. King had canceled his trip to Geneva because racial rioting has erupted in Chicago, and his presence was needed there as a mediator. He sent a video tape of an excellent, and it was played at the appropriate time, but, as one worshipper said, "Even more powerful than his sermon was the simple fact of King's absence." Dr. King chose to be absent in a place where he was expected to be present because of his larger sense of mission.

In a deeper sense, Jesus' mission transcends our definition of urgency. A man was dying ... Jesus' friend. His body grew weak and hot with fever. Mary and Martha were wringing their hand with worry. The whole village of Bethany was troubled. From Bethany's perspective, Jesus should have dropped everything in the world to be there. But Jesus wouldn't. Jesus isn't controlled by illness and death, even his dear friend's death. Jesus is the one in control. Jesus doesn't jump when illness and death say "jump" ... he conquers illness and death for the entire human race. Those are words we especially need to hear right now as illness and death are striking people all around the globe ... Jesus conquers illness and death for the entire human race!

Jesus won't allow illness or death or COVID-19 to set his agenda or be the ruler of time. In today's world we tend to think death is in charge of time. When the hospital calls a "Code Blue" announcing that someone has gone into cardiac arrest, all normal activities cease. Routines are halted; everything else must wait because death has sounded an alarm, and everyone must obey death's timetable.

But not Jesus. He gets the "Code Blue" on Lazarus but doesn't respond to death's timetable. Jesus is Lord over death, and illness, and all time. So, he takes his time because after all, it's his time. He's Lord of the Sabbath, and Lord over all the ticking minutes and desperate seasons of life.

There was a couple in Arkansas who gave their son strict instructions to come home from playing every afternoon no later than 5 o'clock. His parents were very serious about his curfew. If he wasn't home by 5, they'd begin to call around to find out where he was. The boy knew this and was careful to arrive on time every day.

One Monday, however, the day after daylight savings time went into effect, the boy was late coming home. When he finally arrived a few minutes before 6, his mother scolded him for being late.

The little boy was puzzled. He pointed to the window and said, "But look at the light; it's the light that tells me when to come home."

Realizing what had happened, his mother gently explained that the day before everyone reset their clocks and now the daylight lasted longer.

The boy's eyes narrowed. "Does God know about this?" he asked suspiciously.

In a child-like way, this little boy shared John's theological vision. Time finally belongs not to human beings, not to the corruption of illness and death, but to God. We know what time it is not by death's clock, but by Christ's light. Jesus arrived in Bethany on his schedule, not death's. When he got to the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus, the Lord of the past, present, and future, reached into the future of his resurrection victory and reversed the past of Lazarus' death.

John writes: God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him ... can change their clocks. Instead of watching the clock, wondering when death will finally come calling to stop the hour hand from moving, those who believe recognize that Jesus came calling with life eternal.

When Jesus at last came calling on the little village of Bethany, it was the common verdict that he was late. But when Lazarus dancing away from the tomb of death, the light of eternal life in his eyes, the whole world could see that Jesus was right on time ... Just like Jesus will be right on time for today's world ... when today's world-wide pandemic end.

And to that I say, "Thanks be to God. Amen.

SERMON HYMN

Note: If you have a hymnal or musical instrument at home, you may wish to sing or play one of your favorite hymns.

LUTHERAN FAITH STATEMENT

We are not alone. We live in God's world.

We believe in God:

who has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus, the World made Flesh,
to reconcile us and make us new,
who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:

to celebrate God's presence,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

PRAYERS

Lord God, your word of hope brings peace to the world. Bring hope to places that know devastation and comfort to those who grieve the loss of loved ones. Let your love be known through those who work to bring order during the current pandemic. Help us to shoulder the burden of suffering and make us bearers of the hope that can be found in you.

Cast the light of health and well-being on those who have been exposed to the coronavirus, those who have contracted the disease, and those who contract the disease in the days ahead. Bless them, protect them, and bring them speedily to full recovery. Bless all who are ill by the healing of body, soul, and spirit.

Bless medical scientists and researchers around the world with insight and skill, as well as dedication and fortitude as they strive to combat the virus. May their work yield knowledge and understand; the creation of a vaccine; new treatments; and the means to deter the continued spread of the disease.

Grant public health and government officials the strength to act swiftly and decisively; with compassion, understanding ... all in service to humankind, fighting this outbreak, and the

other diseases that plague the planet, threatening the lives of all our brothers and sisters in all nations and communities.

Lord God, you wept at the tomb of Lazarus and weep with all who are in need. May the light of Christ dispel the darkness and bring a sense of hope, peace, and wholeness.

Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

† THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD †

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, and wisdom for life. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness by the power of forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, and the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

THE BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and † give you peace.

Amen.

LENTEN



WALKING THE WAYS OF SORROW

April 1, 2020

Theme: **Jesus is Nailed to the Cross**

(As seen by the soldier on duty)

Text:

Isaiah 6:10



April 5

Palm Sunday Service

April 9

Maundy Thursday

April 10

Good Friday

April 12

Easter Sunday

Christ is Risen; He is Risen Indeed!

**We plan to video the above Holy Week Services.
Additional information will be forwarded to you.
Please be on the watch!!**

*Stay healthy. Stay home. Wash your hands. Eat well. Pray.
Stay in touch with others. Read a good book. Put a jig saw puzzle together.
Don't let yourself get bored!
This, too, shall pass.*