

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH
29 March 2020

Today's gospel is the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. With Martha and Mary we stand at the graves of our beloved dead and hear Jesus say, "I am the resurrection and the life." To those in exile or living in the shadows of death, this story, along with that of the valley of dry bones, proclaims God's promise of resurrection. But they are also words spoken next to the baptismal font, where we die to death and rise to life in Christ. In the power and presence of the risen Christ, Christians prepare to renew their baptismal promises and welcome new brothers and sisters at Easter.

✠GATHERING✠

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P. Trusting in God, Who brings us out of death into life, we gather in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C. Amen.

P. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God Who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

Silence is kept for reflection.

P. Gracious God,

C. I confess that I am held captive by sin and cannot free myself. I have sinned against You in thought, word and deed, by what I have done and by what I have left undone. I have not loved You with my whole heart, I have not loved my neighbor as myself. I pray for forgiveness I cannot earn and renewal I do not merit, given only through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

P. Almighty God looks upon you with mercy, and through Baptism has joined you to the saving death of Jesus Christ so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, you too might walk in newness of life. I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

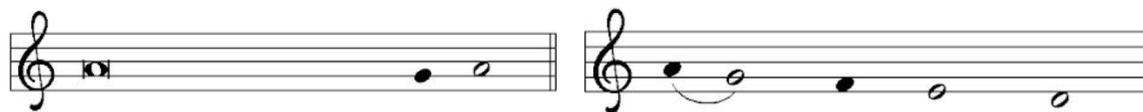
C. Amen.

GREETING

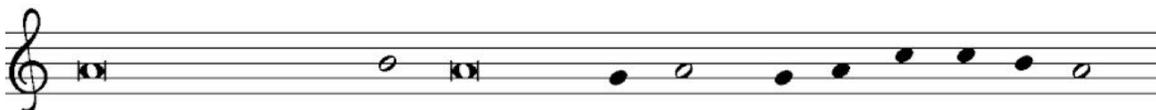
P. The endless grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the rich mercy of God and the unity of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C. And also with you.

THE KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mer - cy.**



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



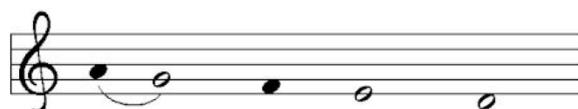
Lord, have mer - cy.



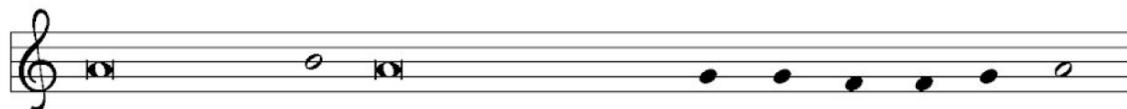
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



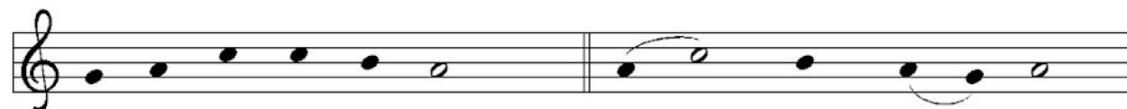
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



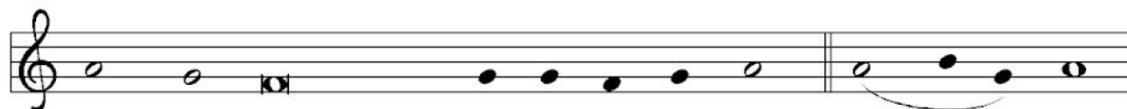
Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. **Lord have mer - cy.**



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra-cious Lord. **A - men.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P. Almighty God, our redeemer, in our weakness we have failed to be Your messengers of forgiveness and hope in the world. Renew us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve You in righteousness all our days, through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C. Amen

† WORD †

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is a promise that Israel as a nation, though dead in exile, will live again in their land through God's life-giving Spirit. Three times Israel is assured that through this vision they will know that "I am the Lord."

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. ²He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, You know." ⁴Then He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶I 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."

⁷So 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. ⁸I 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. ⁹Then He said to me, "Prophesy 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." ¹⁰I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹Then 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.' ¹²Therefore 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. ¹³And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O My people. ¹⁴I 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.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

PSALM 130

I wait for the LORD; in His word is my hope.

Out of the depths

I cry to you, O LORD;

²O LORD, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

³If you were to keep watch over sins,

O LORD, who could stand?

⁴Yet with you is forgiveness,

in order that you may be feared.

⁵I wait for you, O LORD; my soul waits;

in your word is my hope.

⁶My soul waits for the Lord

more than those who keep watch for the morning,

more than those who keep watch for the morning.

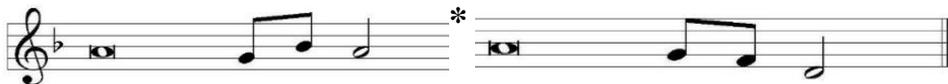
⁷O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is steadfast love;

with the LORD there is plenteous redemption.

⁸For the LORD shall redeem Israel

from all their sins.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *(All together)*



I am the resurrection and the life;

whoever believes in me will never die. (*John 11:45*)

HOLY GOSPEL: St. John 11:1-45

The raising of Lazarus is presented as the last and greatest sign in John's gospel. It reveals Jesus as the giver of life. But as John 11:45-53 makes clear, this sign leads to the plan to execute Jesus.

C. *(spoken)* Glory to you, O Lord.

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped His feet with her hair;

her brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom You

love is ill." ⁴But 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." ⁵Accordingly,

though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus

was ill, He stayed two days longer in the place where He was.

⁷Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸The disciples said

to Him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone You, and are You going there

again?" ⁹Jesus 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. ¹⁰But those who walk at

night stumble, because the light is not in them.”¹¹ After saying this, He told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.”¹² The disciples said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.”¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that He was referring merely to sleep.¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away,¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met Him, while Mary stayed at home.²¹ Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.²² But even now I know that God will give You whatever You ask of Him.”²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”²⁴ Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die, will live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”²⁷ She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

²⁸ 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.”²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to Him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met Him.³¹ 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.³² 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.”³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus began to weep.³⁶ So the Jews said, “See how He loved him!”³⁷ But some of them said, “Could not He Who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.³⁹ 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.”⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank You for having heard Me.⁴² 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.”⁴³ When He had said this, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”⁴⁴ 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.”

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in Him.⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what He had done.⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said,

‘What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. ⁴⁸If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.’ ⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.’ ⁵¹He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. ⁵³So from that day on they planned to put Him to death.

P. The Gospel of the Lord.

C. (*spoken*) Praise to you, O Christ

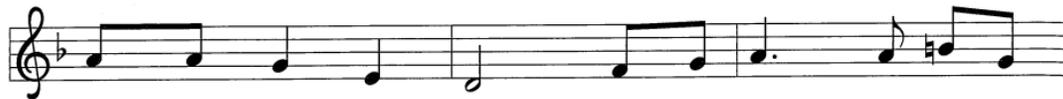
SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery



1 Tree of Life and awe - some mys - t'ry, in your
 2 We re - mem - ber truth once spo - ken, love passed
 3 Christ, you lead and we shall fol - low, stum - bling



death we are re - born; though you die in all of
 on through act and word; ev - 'ry per - son lost and
 though our steps may be; one with you in joy and



his - t'ry, still you rise with ev - 'ry morn, still you
 bro - ken wears the bod - y of our Lord, wears the
 sor - row, we the riv - er, you the sea, we the



rise with ev - 'ry morn.
 bod - y of our Lord.
 riv - er, you the sea.

Verse 4:

God of all our fear and sorrow, God Who lives beyond our death,
 hold us close through each tomorrow, love as near as every breath,
 love as near as every breath.

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our
Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the
Holy Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day He rose again.

He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the
Father.

He will come again to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

✠ PRAYER ✠

OFFERING

If you have not signed up for electronic giving, you can mail your offering in to Bethel (P.O. Box 22, Porter, 56280) or you may make your offering online at our website (www.bethelofporter.com).

OFFERTORY

Create in me...

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a
right spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your
pres - ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from
me. Re - store to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

P. God our provider,

C. You have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these Your gifts, which we receive from Your bounty. Strengthen us to use Your gifts wisely, that we may be a blessing to others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Let us turn our hearts to God, Who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Let us pray for all the baptized people of God, so that strengthened by the disciplines of Lent we may find life where there is death, freedom where there is bondage, and light where there is darkness. (*Silence for prayer.*) Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

Let us pray for the creation, that God would bring new hope and new growth to barren lands, and strength and patience to all who work the land. (*Silence for prayer.*) Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all citizens of the world, that where political or economic crises threaten to destroy, the life-giving Spirit of God will bring hope and true peace. (*Silence for prayer.*) Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

Let us pray for all who are near death, for anyone bearing the pain of grief, and for those who are weakened by illness or injury (*especially*), that like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, they may experience the compassion and power of Christ. (*Silence for prayer.*) Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

Let us pray for this and all congregations, that through repentance and reconciliation the faithful may be filled with the abundant new life in forgiveness. (*Silence for prayer.*) Lord, in Your mercy,

C. hear our prayer.

Let us give thanks for all the faithful who are at rest (*especially*), that together we may all hear the voice of Jesus calling us to resurrection and eternal life. (*Silence for prayer.*) Lord, in Your mercy,

C. Amen

Merciful and gracious God, hear our prayers, restore us to the joy of Your salvation, and uphold us with Your Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

C. Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

P. Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

C. 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.

✠ SENDING ✠

BLESSING

P. As you die and rise with Christ in baptism, may you also live and serve like Christ. The blessing of Almighty God, the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you now and forever.

C. Amen

CLOSING HYMN *Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*



1. Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and king, the triumphs of His grace.
2. The name of Jesus charms our fears and bids our sorrows cease, sings music in the sinner's ears, brings life and health and peace.
3. He speaks, and list'ning to His voice, new life the dead receive; The mournful, broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.
4. Look unto Him, your Savior own, O fallen human race! Look and be saved through faith alone, be justified by grace!
5. To God all glory, praise and love be now and ever giv'n by saints below and saints above, the church in earth and heav'n.

DISMISSAL

P. Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness;
be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good;
render to no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted;
support the weak; help the afflicted;
honor all people;
and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit,
go to love and serve the Lord.

C. Thanks be to God.

Acknowledgements

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Offering: During this period of suspended in-person worship services, Bethel and Hemnes continue to have recurring expenses. Please remember to give financially to support the ministry of our congregations. For Bethel, you may mail your offering to the church office or give online at <http://bit.ly/givebethel>

We remember in prayer:

All who are suffering from COVID-19: those who are ill, those who are grieving, those who are displaced, those who are lonely, those who are frightened, and those who are weary.

The medical professionals, and all others, who are working to help the sick or search for a cure.

Our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering persecution and martyrdom.

And our church family and friends:

Bea Heise, Merv Anderson, Emily Morton, Dick Anderson, Angie Denelsbeck Anderson, Shirley Gabbert, Lynette Christie

Those who Serve:

Ministers: All the People of God **Presiding:** Pastor Ellen Munter

Organist: Terry Dybsetter **Reader:** **Camera/web tech:** Josh Sumption

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God's Promise of Life

Lazarus is dead, already entombed four days; there is an odor. Mary and Martha wonder why Jesus has delayed in coming to Bethany: being there, at Lazarus's sickbed, would have changed things. Why had Jesus not come to Bethany sooner?

Jesus knows what no else knows. He is on the road to Jerusalem, preparing to face the ultimate drama pitting life against death. In His own life, Jesus has endured the wilderness. He knows the spiritual desert of human life. Jesus understands how we teeter on the brink of despair, in danger of falling victim to the forces that would rob us of life. He will endure it all as He hangs upon the cross.

So Jesus weeps, moved by Mary's tears, and goes to Bethany. There before the tomb, Jesus tells those assembled, "Take away the stone." When Martha doubts His action, Jesus says to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

The irony of this story is that soon after raising Lazarus from the tomb, Jesus is led to mount the cross. In His own suffering and death, He draws all the peoples of the world to Himself. The glory of Jesus is manifested first in His death, as a strange and terrifying exchange becomes the vehicle for grace. "I am the resurrection and the life," Jesus says.

God's promise, given at Lazarus's tomb, at the cross, and in the splashing waters of the baptismal font, is that God will act to give us life. Like Jesus, we will sometimes weep. But whether our tears are of sadness or of joy, we are fully awash in the promise of resurrection.

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