

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 29, 2020



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Ministers: The People of Grace Lutheran Church

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Pastor: Rev. Jefferson Cox

Welcome! In today's gospel Jesus reveals his power over death by raising Lazarus from the dead. The prophet Ezekiel prophesies God breathing new life into dry bones. To those in exile or living in the shadows of death, these stories proclaim God's promise of resurrection. In baptism we die with Christ that we might also be raised with him to new life. At the Easter Vigil we will welcome the newly baptized as we remember God's unfailing promise in our baptism.

This is a special bulletin for Grace Lutheran Church. We have closed the Sanctuary to the general public amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and this Sunday the service will be live-streamed from Pastor Jeff's house with his wife Jenny and son Joseph assisting. This bulletin is designed to be used at home by anyone who is baptized serving as the Worship Leader. Holy Communion is not include, since there does not appear to be method of distributing pre-consecrated elements to the congregation that is both safe and efficient. When we can gather again at Grace, we will have a glorious celebration of Holy Communion together again.

GATHERING SONG

On Eagle's Wings

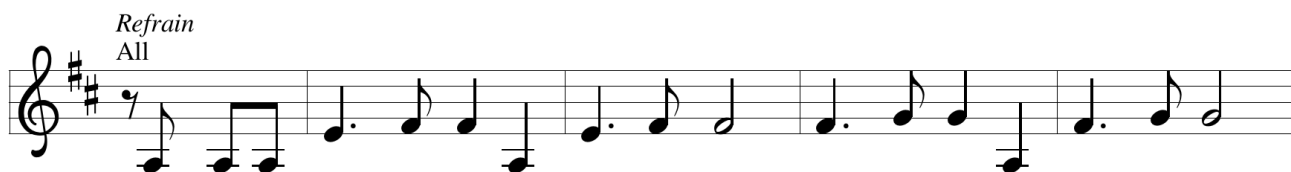
Verses 1 & 2



1 You who dwell in the shel-ter of the Lord, who a-bide in this shad-ow for life,



say to the Lord: "My ref - uge, my rock in whom I trust!"



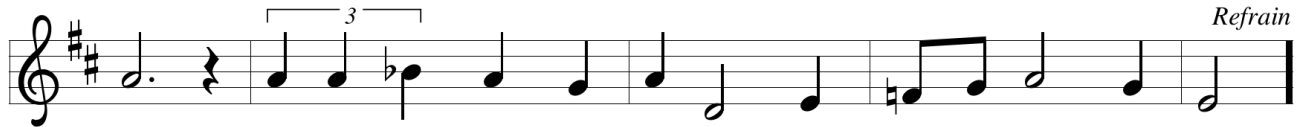
And he will raise you up on ea-gle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,



make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.



2 The snare of the fowl-er will nev-er cap-ture you, and fam-ine will bring you no



fear; un-der God's wings your ref-uge, with faith-ful-ness your shield.



And he will raise you up on ea-gle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn,



make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of his hand.



And hold you, hold you in the palm of his hand.

Text: Michael Joncas, b. 1957

Music: ON EAGLE'S WINGS, Michael Joncas

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GREETING

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

Congregation: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Worship Leader: Let us pray. Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Introduction to the Lesson: *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."*

Reader: ¹The 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, "Prophecy 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, "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." 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."

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 130

The psalm for the day is read responsively.

Reader: ¹Out of the depths have I called to you, O LORD; LORD, hear my voice;
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

Congregation: ²If you, LORD, were to note what is done amiss,
O Lord, who could stand?

³For there is forgiveness with you;
therefore you shall be feared.

Congregation: ⁴I wait for the LORD; my soul waits for him;
in his word is my hope.

⁵My soul waits for the LORD, more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

Congregation: ⁶O Israel, wait for the LORD,
for with the LORD there is mercy;

⁷with him there is plenteous redemption,
and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

SECOND READING

Romans 8:6-11

Introduction to the Lesson: *For Paul, Christian spirituality entails living in the reality of the Holy Spirit. The driving force behind our actions and values is not our sinful desire for self-satisfaction but the very Spirit by which God raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise us from the dead.*

⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

⁷For 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, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹But 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. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If 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.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL LESSON

John 11:1-45

Introduction to the Gospel: *Jesus is moved to sorrow when his friend Lazarus falls ill and dies. Then, in a dramatic scene, he calls his friend out of the tomb and restores him to life.*

Worship Leader: The Holy Gospel according to John in the 11th chapter.

Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.

¹Now 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." ¹¹After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹²The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

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

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

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

⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

After the reading...

Worship Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons

Eyes Opened

Before it is anything else, today's gospel is an up-close, deeply personal story of grief. Even the movements seem familiar: Jesus is on the way, then present to each sister. At last, he stands outside the tomb of his friend who has died, and whom the community mourns.

In today's first reading, we are swept up with Ezekiel and deposited into a wilderness valley full of dry, dead bones. In the valley, God asks Ezekiel, "Mortal, can these bones live?" (Ezek. 37:3). Of Lazarus in our gospel reading for today, we, like Ezekiel, might also respond: "O Lord GOD, you know." How can dry bones come to life? And how could a dead man ever possibly live again? Indeed, we might wonder if it will be enough, ever *could* be enough, that Jesus is "the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). At the same time, we easily understand and echo Martha and Mary, who were both accusing angrily and confessing hopefully when they said, "Lord, if you had been here . . ." (John 11:21, 32).

As John tells it, Lazarus has been in the tomb four days by the time Jesus arrives. By then the whole village is awash in grief. When Jesus weeps too, they are amazed at his loving devotion: here is a strong sign of connection, a visible reminder that Jesus is truly present *among* human community, not *above* it. In the end, Jesus does what we could never imagine was even a remote possibility. He calls to the one entombed; he summons life, like the Spirit blowing over the valley in Ezekiel. God is up to something! Here, a sign of signs: God is making all things new.

New life is emerging from the tombs of our world and from the shadowed corners of our hearts. May Jesus' resurrecting power be felt deep in our own bones!

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

Awake, O Sleeper, Rise From Death



- 1 A - wake, O sleep - er, rise from death, and Christ shall give you light;
- 2 To us on earth he came to bring from sin and fear re - lease,
- 3 There is one bod - y and one hope, one Spir - it and one call,



so learn his love, its length and breadth, its full - ness, depth, and height.
to give the Spir - it's u - ni - ty, the ver - y bond of peace.
one Lord, one faith, and one bap - tism, one God who made us all.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Worship Leader: Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Prayer Leader: God of life, bind your faithful people into one body. Enliven the church with your Spirit and bless the work of those who work for its renewal. Accomplish your work of salvation in us and through us, for the sake of the world. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Prayer Leader: God of life, you love the world you have made and you grieve when creation suffers. Restore polluted lands and waterways. Heal areas of the world ravaged by storms, floods, wildfires, droughts, or other natural disasters (*especially...*). Bring all things to new life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Prayer Leader: God of life, you weep with those who grieve. Unbind all who are held captive by anxiety, despair, or pain *especially* Marc Calhoun, Linda Almond, Barbara Haseley, Duke Tieman, Betty Biddle, Cathi Adams, Michael Morales, Wade Buehler, Gloria Holtzclaw, Betty Daege, Dianne William, Rosemarie & George Smith, Gary Neal, Kathleen Wacker, Karen Bates, Rev. Lydia Villanueva and family, Don Eunis, Lorraine Reinhard, Bonnie Redler, Kathy Leotta, Brytt Mathis, Joseph Valentin, Rita Burneik, Bobby Schlegel, Hilda Taylor, George & Phyllis Clark, Jill Grote, Pastor Bruce Edwards, Larry Timmons, Carl Stone, Neftali Garcia and family, Kelly Sullivan, Susan Gunn, Roy Pruitt, Iris Valentin, Eliezar Granados, Deacon Connie Puls, , Joan Keeton, Alex Stevenson, Steve Davis, the Bell-Brown family and the family and friends of Kathleen Wacker, and those suffering from natural disasters, violence, and terror (especially the victims of the Nashville tornadoes including St. John Lutheran Church, those impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, those in harm's way while serving in the military, and those unjustly or unnecessarily separated from their parents or children,

and *those we name now with our lips or in our hearts*). Fill us with compassion and empathy for those who struggle, and keep us faithful in prayer. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Prayer Leader: God of life, we give thanks for opportunities for this congregation to collaborate with our community in caring for the needs of our neighbors. (Particular ministry partnerships may be named.) Strengthen our ties with other local congregations, agencies, and services. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Prayer Leader: God of life, you are our resurrection. We remember all those who have died and trust that, in you, they will live again (especially). Breathe new life into our dry bones, that we, too, might live with you forever. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Worship Leader: According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

OFFERING

Offerings to the mission and ministry of Grace can be made online at GraceCLW.com (look for the "Donate" button), or (for now) by mailing a check to Grace Lutheran Church, 1812 N. Highland Ave. Clearwater FL 33755. Thank you for your continued financial support during these uncertain times.

OFFERING PRAYER

Prayer Leader: Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Congregation: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Worship Leader: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray in the language closest to our hearts.

Congregation: 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.

BLESSING

Worship Leader: The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus.

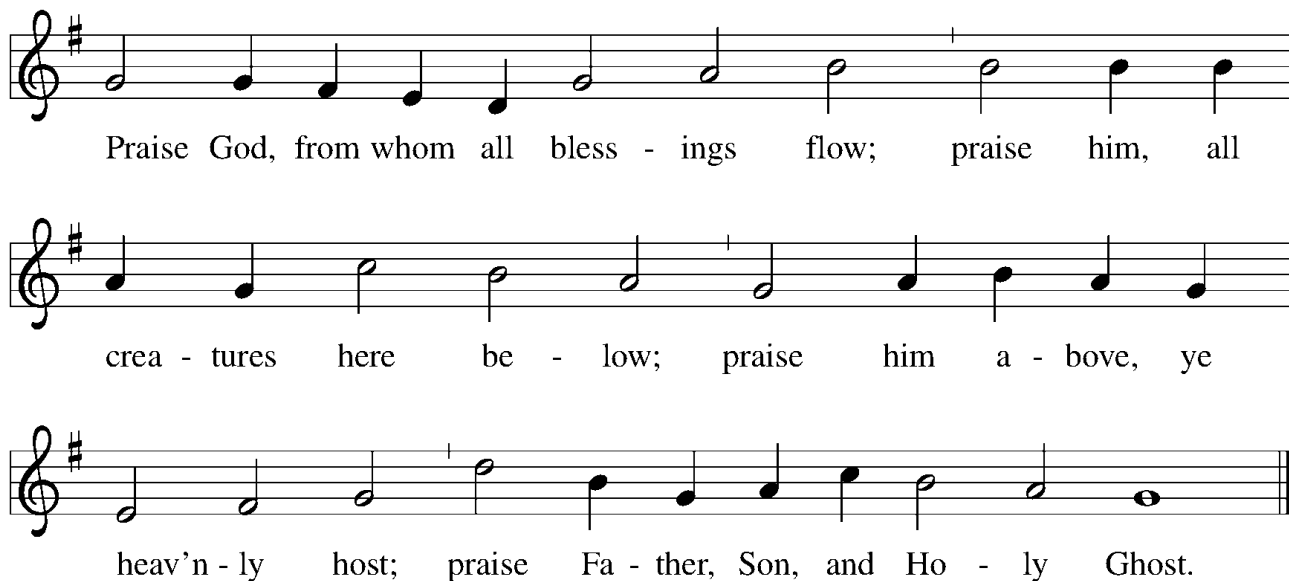
Congregation: Amen.

Worship Leader: The God of all grace bless you now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

SENDING SONG

The Doxology



Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow; praise him, all
crea - tures here be - low; praise him a - bove, ye
heav'n - ly host; praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637–1711

Music: OLD HUNDREDTH, Louis Bourgeois, 1510–1561

DISMISSAL

Pastor: Together we have heard God's Word and shared in the Lord's Supper, we have given and have been forgiven. Now our service of worship has ended, and our service to the world begins! Go in Peace. Christ is with you.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

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