

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
LENT - A SEASON OF REFLECTIONS
Reverend John R. Hanson
March 26, 2023, 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

Julie Hanson, Musician

INTRODUCTION

This last week of Lent we are given a prophecy of the resurrection to come for Christ. But, before Jesus can get to the glory, there is a lot of suffering and sacrifice to be endured. Through Lent we have been considering "A Season of Reflections" to re-learn the steps of God's "life-dance" from Jesus, and now is not the time to stop. It's a challenge, but if we are to receive Christ in his resurrection, we must also witness his journey to the cross. As we face the struggles and sacrifices of following Jesus, we will always find moments of glory that sustain and strengthen us.

CALL TO WORSHIP (10:30)

3rd to 9th Grade Sunday School

THEME AND VERSE

We wait for the Lord like those who hope in God's mercy for God's steadfast love endures forever. We watch like those who eagerly await the morning, searching for the power to redeem us. We hear God's hopeful word, like those who long for pardon. We sing praise and rejoice in God's love.

I wait for you, O LORD; in your word is my hope. (Psalm 130:5)

HYMN

"The Lone, Wild Bird in Lofty Flight"

The lone, wild bird in lofty flight is still with thee nor leaves thy sight.
And I am thine, I rest in thee, come, Holy Spirit, rest in me.

The ends of earth are in thy hand, the sea's dark deep and far off land,
And I am thine, I rest in thee, great Spirit come, rest in me too.

Each secret thought is known to you, the path I walk my whole life through;
My days, my deeds, my hopes, my fears, my deepest joys, my silent tears.

Oh, search me, God, my heart reveal, renew my life, my spirit heal.
For I am thine! I go to thee, Great Spirit, come and rest in me.

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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

God is good.

All the time.

GOSPEL: John 11:14-19, 38-45 (1-45, 46-53)

Jesus, on hearing of Lazarus' illness, returns after a short delay to Judea, risking his own death, in order to raise Lazarus. After proclaiming himself as "the resurrection and the life," he raises Lazarus. As a result, many (but not all people) believe in him.

¹⁴Then Jesus told them (his disciples) 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.

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.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION All the time.

God is good!

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather in the name of the Triune God in order that we might find life in the midst of death!

Amen.

Let us take this time with God to consider all the struggles we have to survive...

O Lord, you know where our confidence lies; you see we trust our abilities, our strength, even our intuition, and we rely on our intelligence ahead of your faithfulness. You make us stewards but we think we are masters. And not until we see the death of the flesh do we consider turning to your Spirit. Are we dried up, is our hope lost? Save, O Lord, your people.

Even though our flesh is dead because of our sin, the Spirit of the one who gives life to the whole house of Israel, the Spirit of the one who raises Christ from the dead gives new life to our mortal bodies. And we may live, trusting not in our own flesh but rather in the Spirit of God that dwells in us.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen

HYMN

"He Leadeth Me"

Green # 501

He leadeth me: oh, blessed thought!
Oh, words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

*He leadeth me, he leadeth me; by his own hand he leadeth me;
His faithful foll'wer I would be, for by his hand he leadeth me.*

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur nor repine;
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

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INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

WELCOME

SHARING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S SERMON

"Yeah, But? Amazing Things!"

Ezekiel connected dem dry bones, Ezekiel connected dem dry bones,
Ezekiel connected dem dry bones, oh, hear the word of the Lord.

Your toe bone connected to your foot bone, your connected to your ankle bone,
Your ankle bone connected to your leg bone, your connected to your knee bone,
Your knee bone connected to your thigh bone, your connected to your hip bone,

Your hip bone connected to your backbone, your connected to your shoulder bone,
Your shoulder bone connected to your neck bone, your connected to your head bone,
Oh, hear the word of the Lord.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, Creator of Life, you call us out of our dark places offering us the grace of new life. When we see nothing but hopelessness, you surprise us with the breath of your spirit. In the name of Jesus, call us out of our complacency and routines, set us free from our self-imposed bonds, and fill us with your spirit of life, compassion, and peace. Amen.

READING: Ezekiel 37:1-14

This is Ezekiel's prophesy of restoration in which he sees a valley of dry bones and is called by God to prophesy that the bones come together and be clothed again in flesh. Then the wind/breath/Spirit blows into them and brings them life! In this way, Ezekiel proclaims, God will bring life and restoration to God's exiled people.

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."

READING: Romans 8:6-11 *God's Spirit, and the spiritual attitude that it nurtures, leads to life and will enliven us not just in our spirits but in our bodies as well.*

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.

HYMN

"I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

Burgundy # 66

I want Jesus to walk with me;
I want Jesus to walk with me;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

When I'm troubled, Lord, walk with me;
When I'm troubled, Lord, walk with me;
When my poor heart's almost breaking,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

When I'm prayin', Lord, walk with me;
When I'm prayin', Lord, walk with me;
When my glad heart's overflowin',
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

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SERMON - *“Take away the stone! Many in the crowds fear the contents of the grave. But do not be afraid of Jesus’ command. May we allow the Spirit to completely reclaim us in body / mind / spirit.” Hear the word of the Lord! Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones, will walk around!*

HYMN

“Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart”

Green # 486

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as thou art,
And make me love thee as I ought to love.

Teach me to feel that thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear;
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh,
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Teach me to love thee as thine angels love;
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The baptism of the heav'n descended dove,
My heart an altar and thy love the flame.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD’S PRAYER

BLESSING & PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We hear the good news, Lord God, *“And 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.”* In this meal we taste the presence of Jesus for we are forgiven and given new life. May we live to the glory of God. Amen.

HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 11:45-53

Jesus’ actions bring belief and disbelief.

⁴⁵Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did believed in him. ⁴⁶But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷So 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.

BENEDICTION

May the blessing of God our Father, his son, Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit be among you and give you strength within to meet the days ahead.

Amen.

Believe and be glad that Jesus is the Lord of both the living and the dead. He is the resurrection and the life. Be willing to share the witness that those who believe in him, though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in him will never die.

May we walk in Christ's light and love!

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Worship, as an action, continues to change.

Use this space to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.

Use this time to center your distractions in order to help activate your worship.

These readings for today are prophetic. As we prepare for Holy Week, the transition point is a focus on resurrection. God's people are given a vision of resurrection through Ezekiel. Paul proclaims that God's Spirit gives us life in our whole being. John's Gospel, also in a prophetic way, describes the raising of Lazarus, and demonstrates that Jesus is the one in whom life and resurrection are found.

As we prepare our hearts for the telling of Jesus' life and death, we are reminded in advance that death does not have the last word, and that resurrection is promised and experienced in the midst of pain, threat and death. Jesus does not shy away from the threat of death, but offers himself as the one who brings life, even though he will ultimately die.

Yet, there is the hope, proclaimed even by Jesus himself, that he, as the first one, will be raised, assuring us that our resurrection is also certain. It's a celebrative theme "the dead have been raised", but also a challenge not to shy away from the forces of death and evil, but to confront them – in ourselves and in our world – in the hope of resurrection.

For every follower of Christ, and every Christian community, resurrection is both a promise and a challenge. It is a promise that opens us to God's life which inspires and empowers us every moment. It is a challenge not to shy away from the sacrifices and struggles that we will inevitably face as we work for new life in our world.

Daily we are called to lay down our own comfort and embrace simplicity for the sake of those who are poor. We are called to think carefully about what we buy and where, what we eat and how much, and how we do business for the sake of those who face restrictions and exploitation by those in power.

In our own relationships we are called to set aside our need to be right, our need to protect ourselves and our fear of those who are different, in order to bring life and grace to those who

need it. Even our worship calls us to lay down our own preferences in favor of others so that they may encounter God in the way that is most helpful and transforming for them, rather than fighting for our own preferred worship.

All of this sacrifice can only be done if we truly believe in and embrace the promise of resurrection – for ourselves, that we will be led to life, and, for our world, that our small contribution will make the world a more whole and alive place. In what ways can you embrace a small sacrifice this week in order to bring life to another?

Devotion resources from John van de Laar at Sacredise.com