

Fifth Sunday in Lent March 29, 2020

Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

Living the Lutheran Lectionary

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.

An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.

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- ✦ www.bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies
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Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM(5pm Kenya/Uganda):** At Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134 and on line through <https://zoom.us/j/815200301>
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at puritaspastor@hotmail.com
- ✦ **Tuesdays at 1:00 PM (8pm Kenya time)** via Zoom to the Lutheran School of Theology - Nyamira , Kenya
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<https://dailyverses.net/john/11/40>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 430 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not Listed
“My song is love unknown”

Samuel Crossman (1624–83), an Anglican priest, composed this poem in the latter part of the 17th century. It was not originally intended to be a hymn. Instead, Crossman’s poem first appeared as one of a collection of nine that he attached to a conduct book he had written for young men. Here he told religious stories and offered encouragement for godly living that children might grow in the faith...

As a piece of devotional verse, Crossman’s poem has much in common with the religious lyrics of earlier 17th-century poets such as John Donne and, more importantly, George Herbert. The religious lyric sought not only to communicate a religious subject but also to foster personal meditation upon it...

The first line of the hymn offers the major theme for devotional contemplation: God’s love for us in the Passion of Jesus Christ (“My Savior’s love to me”) is a love that lies beyond our understanding (“is love unknown”). Each stanza of the hymn takes a different moment in the Passion of Christ and ponders how that moment reveals a divine love beyond human understanding. Read stanza 1 and then read Rom. 5:6–11...

In the closing stanza of the hymn, the poet desires to stand outside the tomb of Jesus and to devote his days to telling the story of God’s love in the Passion of Christ (“Here might I stay and sing, / No story so divine!”). As God’s people gather in worship, we, too, join in that activity...”

- <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOEjZb-rHc0> Still my first choice. Sylvia Burnside, accompanied by the New Irish Orchestra, sings 'My Song Is Love Unknown' on Songs Of Praise.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNN9DBobCdw> Choral presentation with lyrics by The Daily Service Singers on the album, 50 Golden Hymns

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001
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O.T.– “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.”

Psalm – “O LORD ... O LORD ... O LORD ... LORD ... LORD ... LORD ... LORD”

Epistle – “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Gospel – “This illness does not lead to death...”

Ezekiel 37:1-14; RCL, the same reading (Next week: Palm Sunday: Isaiah 50:4-9a; RCL,)

“The “valley of dry bones” is almost certainly the most beloved and well known of Ezekiel’s visions.

The vividness of its imagery, the wonder of its unfolding narrative, and visceral appeal of its symbolism endow it with a sort of plug-and-play appeal--even an uninitiated reader can engage with this wonderful story. And yet the story becomes even more powerful when the reader learns something about its historical context, literary background, and theological symbolism...

Historical context - This vision dates to the period of Israel's history known as the Babylonian Exile....

Literary background - Behind the vision in Ezekiel 37 are two literary forms--the communal lament psalm and the prophetic message of deliverance...

Theological symbolism - A third element in the story that is helpful is the multidimensional meaning of the Hebrew *xwr* (*ruach*). This word can mean "spirit" (as in God's spirit), "wind," and "breath." In this vision, the prophet plays on all three meanings as part of his brilliant strategy to make God's promise of return from exile ring in the ears of the deportees..." **Read the details in the link below.**

➤ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=39

[Rolf Jacobson](#) Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

The Valley of Dry Bones

37 The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley;^[a] it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, “**Son of man, can these bones live?**” And I answered, “**O Lord GOD, you know.**” ⁴ Then he said to me, “**Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.**” ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath^[b] to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon 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.”

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling,^[c] and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, “**Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.**” ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹ Then he said to me, “**Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’**” ¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own

land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

I Will Be Their God; They Shall Be My People Verses 15-28

- a. [Ezekiel 37:1](#) Or *plain*; also verse [2](#)
- b. [Ezekiel 37:5](#) Or *spirit*; also verses [6](#), [9](#), [10](#)
- c. [Ezekiel 37:7](#) Or *an earthquake* (compare [3:12](#), [13](#))

“The book of Ezekiel tells some of the most macabre tales in the Bible... In Christian circles, however, the name Ezekiel almost universally invokes the story of a valley filled with dry bones that is the reading for the fifth Sunday in Lent (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

It is no wonder that the Christian tradition often reduces the book of Ezekiel to this one magnificent text, given the strange, violent, incomprehensible, and even offensive nature of much of the book (see Ezekiel 16 and 23). It is much more palatable to reach for the hope of resurrection that one finds in Ezekiel 37--or perhaps the lush picture of new creation in Ezekiel 47--than to dare confront some of the book's darker imagery. Ezekiel's audience members misunderstood his melodramatic ranting as much as we do. In an exasperated response to God, the prophet himself laments: "Ah, Lord GOD! They say of me: He is just a riddlemonger" (Ezekiel 21:5 JPS).

God actually begins Ezekiel 37 by presenting a riddle to the prophet: "Mortal, can these bones live?" (Ezekiel 37:3)... We cannot fully comprehend the magnificent hope in the latter verses of this passage without some attention to why Ezekiel's response is so resigned... What has brought Ezekiel to the point of near speechlessness and despair?

Because we so often do not read the rest of the book leading up to this grand scene, we have a myopic view of the prophet's own desperation and the plight of the community to which this story attempts to give hope.... More importantly, we forget the historical trauma that accompanied this exile. We forget that the Babylonians tortured the inhabitants of Jerusalem with siege warfare that lasted almost two years, leading to famine, disease, and despair (2 Kings 25:3)...

The miracle of this vision does not simply lie in its theatricality. The true miracle is that it occurs after the community has faced such devastating loss... While celebrating the victory over death, we refuse to evaluate the systems, patterns, and consequences of our walk through the valley of its shadow..." [See continued summary at the end of the lesson.](#)

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=893 David G. Garber Jr. Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, Ga

Psalm 130; RCL, the same reading (Psalm 118:19-29 or 31:9-16; RCL splits into Liturgy of the Palms, Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 and Liturgy of the Passion, Psalm 31:9-16)

“The 130th Psalm has sometimes been called the “funeral psalm” because of its poignant expression of deep sorrow. When Luther was asked his opinion on which were the best Psalms, he replied, Psalms 32, 51 and 130 – three of the seven penitential psalms. He called

these three the “Pauline psalms” because, like Paul’s epistles, they lay out the realities of the depths of human sin, the abundance of God’s grace, and Christ’s complete redemption.

Luther lectured on Psalm 130 in 1617 and again in 1541 at the end of his teaching career...” **Read or listen to the details of Luther’s lectures at this website.**

➤ <http://lcrwtvl.org/2017/04/mid-week-lent-5-psalm-130-4517/>

Rev. Paul Nielsen – pastor, Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Waterville, Maine

My Soul Waits for the Lord A Song of Ascents.

130 Out of the depths I cry to you, **O LORD!**

2 O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

3 If you, **O LORD**, should mark iniquities,

O Lord, who could stand?

4 But with you there is forgiveness,

that you may be feared.

5 I wait for the **LORD**, my soul waits,

and in his word I hope;

6 my soul waits for the **Lord**

more than watchmen for the morning,

more than watchmen for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the **LORD!**

For with the **LORD** there is steadfast love,

and with him is plentiful redemption.

8 And he will redeem Israel

from all his iniquities.

“Martin Luther’s hymns were vitally important to the Reformation. They presented the gospel in beautiful, memorable ways that people could understand in their own language.

One of Luther’s earliest compositions was “From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee,” a paraphrase of Psalm 130 (*Aus tiefer Not schrei’ ich zu dir*, LSB 607, [TLH-329]). He wrote this hymn in 1523, around the time that he was revising the Latin Mass. Near the end of the year Luther wrote a letter to George Spalatin, the court chaplain to Elector Frederick the Wise and encouraged Spalatin to compose German hymns based on the Psalms. He enclosed “From Depths of Woe” as an example. Little did Luther know that a few short years later in 1525 that same hymn would be sung at Elector Frederick’s funeral. It was also sung at the funeral of Frederick’s successor, Elector John the Steadfast, in 1532.

When the Diet of Augsburg was in session in 1530, it was not safe for Luther to be there in person, so he had to wait at Coburg for news of the proceedings. Luther was worried about

the proceedings, and reportedly gathered the servants together saying, “Come, let us, despite the devil, sing *Aus tiefer Not schrei’ ich zu dir* and thereby praise and glorify God.”

Luther died in Eisleben on February 18, 1546. His body was brought to Wittenberg for burial, and on February 20 the funeral processional made a stop in the town of Halle. As Luther’s body lay in state in the Church of Our Dear Lady this hymn was sung.

The text of “From Depths of Woe I Cry to Thee” focuses on the sorrow we feel for our sins, and our hope in the forgiveness of Christ. It begins in the depths of despair that Luther himself felt as he was in agony over his sinfulness. The hymn continues by emphasizing that we can do nothing to earn God’s forgiveness, but God’s mercy towards us is a free gift. The final stanza expresses trust that the grace of God is greater than our sins, and that He will redeem us in the end...”

- <https://lutheranreformation.org/theology/depths-woe-cry-thee/>
Rev. Dr. Mark Birkholz, pastor, Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church, Oak Lawn, IL.

Romans 8:1-11; RCL, Romans 8:6-11 (Philippians 2:5-11; RCL, splits into Liturgy of the Palms, Matthew 21:1-11 and Liturgy of the Passion, Philippians 2:5-11)

“The second lesson for Lent 5 may be attractive from a simple numerical standpoint. The first lesson has fourteen verses, the gospel has forty-five, and the epistle has only six! (11 in the case of the Lutheran Lectionary). But there are other good reasons to focus on the Romans passage, especially in Lent. The Romans passage helps us to move away from thinking only about individual sins and individual spiritual activities to explore our basic orientation to life as Christ-believers...”

In our focus during Lent on our individual sins we can center so much on our actions and mis-actions that we can miss the larger issue. What is our mindset? What is our orientation toward life? For Paul the proper mindset is the Spirit, the same Spirit that makes Christ present today and the same Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead.”

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=46
[Walter F. Taylor, Jr.](#) Ernest W. and Edith S. Ogram Professor of New Testament Studies, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH

Life in the Spirit

8 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.^[a]

² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you^[b] free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,^[c] he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus^[d] from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Heirs with Christ Verses 12-17

Future Glory Verses 18-30

God's Everlasting Love Verses 31-39

- a. [Romans 8:1](#) Some manuscripts add *who walk not according to the flesh (but according to the Spirit)*
- b. [Romans 8:2](#) Some manuscripts *me*
- c. [Romans 8:3](#) Or *and as a sin offering*
- d. [Romans 8:11](#) Some manuscripts lack *Jesus*

“Romans 8: is there a better loved, more soaring passage in the New Testament than this one? There is much here to linger over, savor, celebrate. The Lectionary carves out only six verses but the truth is, Romans 8:1-17 form such a logical—and also lyric—unit that I would suggest reading all 17 verses, and indeed, this sermon starter will take in all of these verses, including the lovely “Abba, Father” ending to this unit.

A hallmark of Pauline theology is the breathtaking claim that by virtue of having the Spirit of God in our hearts, we have been spiritually relocated. We now live “in Christ.” Seldom in history has such a short, two-word prepositional phrase packed such a wallop. Romans 8 tells us right off the bat that now there is “no condemnation” for us. With God’s Spirit within us, we are liberated, set free, righteous in the sight of God. Our entire mindset is directed toward God. Our spirits are alive and victorious. We do not lead fearful lives but bold and free lives in which we can call God our Father even as we celebrate our status as children of God. Paul cannot say enough as to what this change of status means.

Yet everything in Romans 8 depends on that central idea that we now are “in Christ.” This is a change of cosmic position and status so grand, and so mind-boggling, that you surely can understand why some think that it should be as plain to see as the nose on someone’s face...”

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/lent-5a/?type=lectionary_epistle Rev. Scott E. Hoezee is an ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church in North America and the first Director of the Center for Excellence in Preaching.

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“In chapter 7... St. Paul sketches further the nature of sin and the law. It is the law that makes sin really active and powerful, because the old man gets more and more hostile to the law since he can't pay the debt demanded by the law. Sin is his very nature; of himself he can't do otherwise. And so the law is his death and torture...”

St. Paul concludes here that, if we understand the law properly and comprehend it in the best possible way, then we will see that its sole function is to remind us of our sins, to kill us by our sins, and to make us deserving of eternal wrath...

Then St. Paul shows how spirit and flesh struggle with each other in one person...Yet the whole human being is both: spirit and flesh. The human being fights with himself until he becomes completely spiritual.

In chapter 8, St. Paul comforts fighters such as these and tells them that this flesh will not bring them condemnation. He goes on to show what the nature of flesh and spirit are. Spirit, he says, comes from Christ, who has given us his Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit makes us spiritual and restrains the flesh. The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children no matter how furiously sin may rage within us, so long as we follow the Spirit and struggle against sin in order to kill it. Because nothing is so effective in deadening the flesh as the cross and suffering, Paul comforts us in our suffering. He says that the Spirit, [cf. previous note about the meaning of "spirit."] love and all creatures will stand by us; the Spirit in us groans and all creatures long with us that we be freed from the flesh and from sin. Thus we see that these three chapters, 6, 7 and 8, all deal with the one work of faith, which is to kill the old Adam and to constrain the flesh...

You, however, follow the reasoning of this letter in the order in which it is presented. Fix your attention first of all on Christ and the Gospel, so that you may recognize your sin and his grace. Then struggle against sin, as chapters 1-8 have taught you to. Finally, when you have come, in chapter 8, under the shadow of the cross and suffering, they will teach you, in chapters 9-11, about providence and what a comfort it is."

- <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=luth&b=45&c=8>
Martin Luther's Bible Commentary

John 11:1-45 (46-53) or John 11:17-27, 38-53; RCL, John 11:1-45 (John 12:12-19 (Palm Sunday Procession) and Matthew 26:1-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-66 or John 12:20-43; RCL has no Gospel reading for Liturgy of the Palms (see 2nd reading) and lists for the Liturgy of the Passion, Matthew 26:14-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54)

"In the older Lutheran Lectionary, the lesson continued through v. 53 -- which includes an ironic twist to this event. It is a resurrection that leads to death. Jesus, by returning to Judea to give life to another, will give up his own life as the chief priests and the Pharisees decide to put him to death in order to protect the whole nation from being destroyed by the Romans. At the time John was written, the readers knew that such fears were well founded; the Romans had come in and destroyed the temple in 70 AD, although not because of the insurrection of Jesus or his followers.

Especially as we look at this text on the Fifth Sunday in Lent, its connection with Jesus crucifixion should be noted. Jesus great power for giving life only raises the anger and power of those who want to take life.

"John's Gospel begins with a wedding and closes with a funeral." These are part of the opening comments on these verses by Malina and Rohrbaugh (Social-Science Commentary on

the Gospel of John). I don't know what significance it has to understanding our passage, but thought it was a nice tid-bit to share.

As usual in John, this miracle has both a more literal meaning -- the raising of Lazarus from death -- and a more symbolic meaning -- the giving of life to all people whom Jesus loves. There is physical death and life illustrated by Lazarus. There is spiritual death as separation from God and spiritual life as connection with God. Both are part of John's message in this text. [A similar double meaning was part of last week's story about the healing of a blind man -- there is both physical and spiritual blindness.]..."

➤ <http://www.crossmarks.com/brian/john11x1.htm>

Brian P. Stoffregen's commentary notes, pastor, Faith Lutheran, Yuma AZ

“The Holy Gospel according to 11th Chapter of St. John”

The Death of Lazarus (omitted in alternate reading)

11 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” ⁴ But when Jesus heard it he said, **“This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”**

⁵ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶ So, when he heard that Lazarus^[a] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” ⁸ The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” ⁹ Jesus answered, **“Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. ¹⁰ But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”**

¹¹ After saying these things, he said to them, **“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.”** ¹² The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” ¹³ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, **“Lazarus has died, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”** ¹⁶ So Thomas, called the Twin,^[b] said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

I Am the Resurrection and the Life

¹⁷ Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles^[c] off, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰ So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." 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.^[d] Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*** ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Jesus Weeps (omitted in alternate reading)

²⁸ When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved^[e] in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴ And he said, ***"Where have you laid him?"*** They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus wept. 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 also have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus Raises Lazarus

³⁸ Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, ***"Take away the stone."*** Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for 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 lifted up his eyes and said, ***"Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said***

this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, ***“Lazarus, come out.”***⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ***“Unbind him, and let him go.”***

The Plot to Kill Jesus (Verses 54 – 57 omitted in Lutheran Lectionary and verses 46-57 omitted in Revised Common Lectionary)

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him,⁴⁶ but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.⁴⁷ So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs.⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”⁴⁹ But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all.⁵⁰ Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”⁵¹ He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,⁵² and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.⁵³ So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

⁵⁴ *Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.*

⁵⁵ *Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.*⁵⁶ *They were looking for* *Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?”*⁵⁷ *Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.*

- a. [John 11:6](#) Greek *he*; also verse [17](#)
- b. [John 11:16](#) Greek *Didymus*
- c. [John 11:18](#) Greek *fifteen stadia*; a *stadion* was about 607 feet or 185 meters
- d. [John 11:25](#) Some manuscripts omit *and the life*
- e. [John 11:33](#) Or *was indignant*; also verse [38](#)
- f. [John 11:56](#) Greek *were seeking for*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“Our text today is the account of “The Raising of Lazarus,” from John chapter 11. In this chapter, Jesus does three things: He raises the dead. He arouses faith. And he rouses the opposition. Three things, and what he does, he does for you.

The **most obvious thing** Jesus does is to raise a dead man. Think about that. Jesus raises a dead man! Who has ever heard of such a thing?...

So now Lazarus is dead. Jesus goes to Bethany. Four days Lazarus has been dead now. No question about it. No one can dispute that he was really dead. He was not just unconscious or something. The body is already starting to decay. Jesus goes to the tomb. There’s a large stone laid across the entrance. “Take away the stone.” Then Jesus calls in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” It’s a good thing Jesus put Lazarus’s name on there or else maybe all the dead bodies in that graveyard would have come out! So powerful is Jesus’ word. “Lazarus, come out!” Jesus’ word does what it says, and so Lazarus does come out, looking a little like the Mummy, I suppose. But this man is alive, his flesh is restored. Take off the grave clothes! Life comes walking out of that tomb. Life called forth by Jesus, the Son of God.

“Lazarus, come out!” Jesus is going to say that again someday—only this time, with your name on it! And the name of your loved one who has died in the Lord. “Doris, come out!” “Albert, come out!” Your brother, your daughter, your husband, your wife—all those who die in the Lord, who die in faith—Christ will raise their bodies from the dead at the last day. Christ will raise your dead body when he comes again... The raising of Lazarus signals this. It is a sign of the resurrection to come.

It is a sign of Christ’s own resurrection. He himself would rise from the dead in just a short while. The stone would be rolled away, but not by human hands. The grave clothes would be left behind. Jesus himself would rise from the dead, leading the way for us, from death into life. He is the firstfruits of the resurrection of the dead. First Jesus, and then all of us...

The **second thing** Jesus does is to arouse faith. Faith in him. Jesus says to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

Jesus calls forth faith from Martha. Not that she didn’t have it already. She did. She tells Jesus, “I know that my brother will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” And that’s true. That is Martha’s faith in what God had promised, even in the Old Testament: the resurrection of the dead on the last day. But Jesus leads her to see what’s standing right in front of her eyes, to make the connection: the connection between the resurrection on the last day and the one who is the resurrection, there in front of her on that day. ..

And the **third thing** that Jesus does in this chapter is to rouse the opposition. That’s the undercurrent in this story, the rising tide of opposition to Jesus. His enemies are being roused to action. This miraculous sign, done right outside Jerusalem, is the last straw. Jesus is a threat to their system, to the religious industry they had built up for themselves. He’s a threat to their power. They’ll have nothing more of it...

Did Jesus know that going in? Did he know that raising Lazarus would stir up such opposition? Of course he did. The last time he was in Jerusalem, they tried to stone him. When Jesus got the news about Lazarus and said he was going to go there, his disciples objected, “But

Rabbi, a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?" Yes, Jesus would go there, knowing what lay in store for him.

Jesus is telling us today that he was willing to die for our salvation. He willingly, knowingly, went into that buzz saw of opposition and hatred known as the Jewish Sanhedrin. He would go to Jerusalem—he would go to the cross—for you...

So now take those three things Jesus did and apply them to what he is doing here today: First, Jesus is assuring you of the resurrection of the dead, for you and for your loved ones who have died in the Lord. Second, he is calling you to faith, to faith in him who is the resurrection and the life. And third, by facing such hostile opposition, Jesus is showing you the full extent of his love, that he would willingly go to the cross for your sake. Dear friends, all that Jesus does, here in the raising of Lazarus, he does for you!"

- <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2017/04/the-raising-of-lazarus-sermon-on-john-11-53-by-pr-charles-henrickson/>

Rev. Charles Henrickson currently serves at St Matthew Lutheran Church in Bonne Terre, Missouri



- Agnus Day appears with the permission of <https://www.agnusday.org/>

How are you doing with *The Matthew Challenge*, a handwritten copy of the book of Matthew by the Last Sunday of the Church Year (Christ the King Sunday), November 22, 2020.

"If we are to teach and preach this text responsibly (Ezekiel 37:1-14), we must pay attention to the boundary between life and death. We must at once recognize and bear witness to the despair of the world around us while also inspiring hope for a seemingly impossible future. Our task, like Ezekiel's, is not an easy one. But if we are able to shed our cynicism and despair, if we are willing to discern and testify to the death that surrounds our communities, and if we are prepared to obey the charge to command the spirit of God to renew them, perhaps the Church can and will fulfill its role to inspire new life in the darkest valleys."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=893 David G. Garber Jr. Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, McAfee School of Theology, Mercer University, Atlanta, Ga

LC-MS Three Year Lectionary, Year A 2020 <http://yaag.org/>

		Psalm	OT/ 1 st Reading	Epistle/2 nd Reading	Gospel
5-Apr	Palm Sunday	Psalm 118:19-29 (26)	Isaiah 50:4-9a Psalm 31:9-16	Philippians 2:5-11	Matthew 26:1-27:66 Matthew 27:11-66 John 12:20-43
Lent	9-Apr	Maundy Thursday	Psalm 116:12-19 (17) Psalm 116:12-19 (17)	Exodus 24:3-11 Exodus 12:1-14	Hebrews 9:11-22 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 Matthew 26:17-30 John 13:1-17, 31b-35
	10-Apr	Good Friday	Psalm 22 (1) Psalm 31 (1)	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9 John 18:1-19:42 John 19:17-30

Holy Week Year A	First reading	Psalm	Second reading	Gospel
Monday of Holy Week April 6, 2020 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Isaiah 42:1-9	Psalm 36:5-11	Hebrews 9:11-15	John 12:1-11
Tuesday of Holy Week April 7, 2020 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Isaiah 49:1-7	Psalm 71:1-14	1 Corinthians 1:18-31	John 12:20-36
Wednesday of Holy Week April 8, 2020 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Isaiah 50:4-9a	Psalm 70	Hebrews 12:1-3	John 13:21-32
Maundy Thursday April 9, 2020 <i>Holy Thursday</i> <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14	Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19	1 Corinthians 11:23-26	John 13:1-17, 31b-35
Good Friday April 10, 2020 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Isaiah 52:13-53:12	Psalm 22	Hebrews 10:16-25 or <i>Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9</i>	John 18:1-19:42
Holy Saturday April 11, 2020 <i>ART -- PRAYER</i>	Job 14:1-14 or <i>Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-24</i>	Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16	1 Peter 4:1-8	Matthew 27:57-66 or <i>John 19:38-42</i>
<i>Italicized readings, complementary to the standard reading, may be used with, or in place of it.</i>				

- <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/lections.php?year=A&season=Holy%20Week>
Revised Common Lectionary