

A Service of Word and Prayer for the Family at Home – March 29

[L = Leader / R = Response / A = All]

CALLING TO GOD

L: Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

R: Who has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. *(1 Peter 1:3)*

L: Let us draw near to God and give our hearts to the Lord.

R: For his mercy extends to all who fear him, from generation to generation. *(Luke 1:50)*

L: Hear us, O God, as we gather. Meet us in the throne room of our hearts and be our Lord and King.

R: Reveal your everlasting love. Teach us your holy ways. Humble our hearts. Forgive our many sins.

L: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we confess to you that we are sinful by nature and have sinned against you and others by thought, word, and deed.

R: Therefore, we flee for refuge to your infinite mercy, seeking your grace and begging your forgiveness, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. *(A moment of silent confession)*

L: But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in faithfulness and love.

R: Yes, abounding in faithfulness and love! Amen *(Psalm 86:15)*

(Optional: if you have a candle, please light it now)

L: Jesus Christ is the Light of the World. **R: Whom no darkness can overcome!** *(John 1:5)*

L: Lord God, you glorified your Son when he brought Lazarus back from death and glorified him again in his mighty Resurrection and Ascension to your right hand. Helps us to see your eternal glory in Jesus Christ and to await our own resurrection to life everlasting; **R: through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen**

LEARNING FROM THE WORD OF GOD

First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14 *(May be read)*

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11 *(May be read)*

Gospel Reading: John 11:1-45 *(Must be read)*

Discussion/Devotion *(Options: After the reading of the Gospel, the discussion questions found on the devotional sheet may be used OR the devotion may be read OR the Leader may speak from their heart on the Lessons)*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

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

Prayers

L: God of all mercy and comfort, we come to you in the name of Jesus, lifting our hearts in faith and love.

R: Hear our prayers and grant us your comfort and peace.

L: We pray, O God, that by your Sovereign Will you order all things for the good of those who love you.

R: Help us to trust you with our lives, with our loved ones, and with the days that lie ahead.

L: We pray for our government leaders, our medical communities, our fire, police, first responders and others whose duties keep them in the public square:

R: Protect their health, protect their families, and give them courage and stamina to carry out their duties.

L: We pray for those who keep our public utilities up and running, those who keep our food flowing from farm to store, those who care for our aged and infirm in nursing and assisted living homes around the nation:

R: Protect their health, protect their families, and give them courage and stamina to carry out their duties.

L: We pray for the nations of the world that all may lift their prayers to you and that those who govern over them may use their resources and talent righteously and for the good of their people:

R: Protect their health, protect their families, and give them courage and stamina to carry out their duties.

L: We pray for grace to do our own part in caring for others, serving our families, and helping keep all safe:

R: Help us overcome our selfish moments and our boredom, and keep us focused on love's work.

L: We pray for our church, it's pastor and leaders, that they may be wise and strong in leadership among us.

R: Grant them the gift of your Holy Spirit and the true wisdom that comes down from above.

L: We pray for a fresh outpouring of your Holy Spirit upon the nation, and in our own hearts, that we may be renewed in true faith and see your works and hear your call evermore clearly in our lives:

R: Grant us all the gift of your Holy Spirit that we may daily take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ.

L: We pray for those who need your present help and healing touch...

R: (Prayers are shared by all for those whose needs are on our hearts.)

L: We pray to you, heavenly Father, with thanksgiving for all your gifts, knowing that you always hear us for Christ's sake; **R: And in the name of Jesus we are bold to pray:**

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.

Life Offering (Optional. Sung: "The Doxology")

Praise God from whom all blessings flow / For all his gifts on us bestowed
To serve the Lord my daily goal / With all my heart, mind, strength and soul

Benediction

L: The Lord God keep us in his care. **R: Keep us safe, everywhere.**

L: The Lord God bless us from above. **R: Send his blessings down in love.**

L: The Lord God grant us his grace. **R: Enfold us tight in his embrace.**

Dismissal

L: As for me and my house.... **R: We will serve the Lord!** (*Joshua 24:15*)

HOW TO PREPARE

- A. Items needed: Worship Sheet, Bible or Bible Sheet, Devotion, Candle & Lighter (optional).
- B. Someone will need to serve in the LEADER role.** They should:
1. Gather the items and determine the place for worship. Print enough copies for everyone.
 2. Mark, assign, and/or read the Bible readings. The Gospel *must be* read; the others *may be* read.
 3. Lead the discussion questions or read the devotion or watch a teaching video (links below)
 4. Ask for prayer requests and offer petitions for the requests if desired.
 5. Lead the offering song or find someone who is willing to do so (optional) or sing along with one of the Music Options (below; YouTube link)
- C. The discussion questions (optional) are intended to give everyone a chance to share what God's Word has raised up in their hearts/minds.
- D. A devotion (optional) is provided and may be read by the leader OR someone else OR the leader may offer their own devotion "from the heart", OR one of the videos may be watched.
- E. For mature groups, the scripted prayers may be skipped and each individual offer up their own petitions in a Circle Prayer.
- F. Children might be included by lighting the candle, reading a lesson, sharing their prayer requests, sharing their answers to the questions if used.

LESSON QUESTIONS – JOHN 11:1-45

- Q1? Have you ever had a serious illness that made you fear for your life? If yes, did it make you draw nearer to God? How so?
- Q2? Jesus knew ahead of time what would happen to Lazarus (die) and what he would do (restore to life). He said that it was meant to bring God glory (vv. 4, 40) and that he would be glorified as well (v. 4). Which of the characters in the story seem to "see the glory"? How did they show that they "got the point" of this miraculous sign? Was it Lazarus? Martha? Mary? The Disciples? Thomas? The Jews?
- Q3? Do you believe that Jesus Christ can give you divine life with God that is greater than death and which will never end? Jesus wants to know if you believe this (v.25)....
- Q4? What do you imagine "eternal life" with God will be like? Do you feel that it's already started now?

Music Links

- My Life Is in You <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPgHufcoreg>
Glory Be to Jesus <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOTTBL5UQE8>

Message Links

- Saddleback <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dca8SSxXCmM> (Animated telling of the Gospel)
Movie:Jesus of Nazareth https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0M7vvX6_M (Takes "creative license"...)
Movie:Gospel of John <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JR1ku3kE2IY> (By the book)
Constantine Cambell <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/its-never-too-late-for-jesus> (Text)

Devotion for March 29, 2020

I've put on the church sign the following: When trouble lands....faith soars. In our Gospel text from John 11, we can see how faith does or doesn't soar in the various characters of the text. I see four different responses among the characters.

First, you can be afraid of death as we see the disciples are afraid (v. 8). This is the natural reaction, I think, of most people. Who wants to die, after all. But fear is not faith and it certainly doesn't help us soar.

Second, you can be angry and critical of God because of death. Anger and bargaining with God is not uncommon as death approaches. Both Mary and Martha and some of the Jews express their disappointment with Jesus to Jesus (v. 21, 32, 37). Disappointment and anger, of course, are derived in part from the "sting of death". When the realization settles in that death is coming and everything will change because of it, then emotions hard to deal with arise. I imagine that some of us have been angry with God in relation to a death. We may still be so many years after someone we love has passed away. We intuitively understand that life and death belong in God's hands, and so he gets the blame for our pain. Such anger, such disappointment, however, does not help faith soar. If held as a grudge in one's heart, it can actually harm one's faith. The raising of Lazarus serves as a hint in time of what God is about to do in eternity when he raises the crucified Jesus from the grave. Both are a sign that it is God's Will to give life to our fallen world and death never has the final say. If there is a thorn of death in your soul causing you pain, keep bringing it to Jesus. He is the only one in the end who can remove it and bring the healing balm of God's divine life to your wound.

Third, in the face of death one can be utterly overwhelmed and lose hope. I think sister Mary personifies this as she can hardly do anything but weep at Jesus' feet (vv.32-33). Can you blame her? No doubt she truly loved her brother Lazarus and is devastated by his death. I imagine many people right now around the world are weeping and losing hope. The corona contagion must seem in some places the only guaranteed future for everyone. In Italy, whole families have died by the virus. My hope is that all of us will be sensitive to those who are overwhelmed or sorrowing. As God's resurrection people, we are called to bring hope to the hopeless and if nothing else, we can pray for those who are sorrowing around the world.

Finally, in the face of death we come to Martha in whom faith soars. Martha, like Mary says: ***"If you had been here, my brother would not have died."*** She, too, is feeling the sting of death. Yet her faith, focused on Jesus, begins to soar when she says: ***"But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."*** That's how faith takes flight...it focuses on Jesus and trusts God. Jesus rewards her faith: ***"Your brother will rise again."*** What a promise for faith to grasp! Martha reaches for it: ***"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*** This is true and a testimony to her faith. But Jesus wants to take her faith even higher by helping her understand that the "last day" has already arrived in him: ***"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*** Jesus, of course, asks you and me the same question today. Do we really believe that we have a spiritual connection to God because of him? Do we really believe that his resurrection from the dead guarantees our own? Do we really believe that death doesn't get the last word, but God does? Do we really believe that the divine life God gives us through Jesus is living in us right now? In this time of uncertainty in which the shadow and fear of death has crept all over the land, may your faith soar as did Martha's faith, and may you make the same great confession: ***"Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who has come into the world."*** Amen

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 29, 2020

First Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

¹The 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; it was full of bones. ²And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶And 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." ⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And 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. ⁹Then 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." ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. ¹¹Then 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.' ¹²Therefore 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. ¹³And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And 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."

Second Reading: Romans 8:1-11

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For 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, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in 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. ⁵For 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. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹You, 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. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although 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 Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Gospel: John 11:1-45 [46-53]

¹Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. ³So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴But 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." ⁵Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶So, when he 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 seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹Jesus 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. ¹⁰But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." ¹¹After saying these things, he said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." ¹²The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." ¹³Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant

taking rest in sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, ¹⁵and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” ¹⁶So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” ¹⁷Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” 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. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” ²⁸When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When 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. ³²Now 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.” ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵Jesus wept. 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 also have kept this man from dying?” ³⁸Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹Jesus 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.” 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 lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I 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.” ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” ⁴⁴The 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.” ⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he 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 gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸If 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.” ⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.]

Lessons for Next Week:

John 12:12-19; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 118:19-29; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:1-27:66