

Abundant Life Lutheran Church

3486 Raleigh Street, East St. Paul, Manitoba, R2E 1B7
Phone 204-255-5433 Email: office@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Where ALL are welcome!

SUNDAY WORSHIP

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 29, 2020

Abundant Life Lutheran Church
3486 Raleigh Street
East St. Paul, MB R2E 1B9

Office Phone: 204-255-5433

Pastor's Cell: 204-995-2350

www.abundantlifelutheran.ca/

<https://www.facebook.com/abundantlifelutheran/>

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INTRODUCTION

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.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

READINGS

Ezekiel 37:1-14

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

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."

Psalm 130

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

¹Out | 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 | supplication.

³If you were to keep watch | over sins,

O LORD, | who could stand?

⁴**Yet with you | is forgiveness,**

in order that you | may be feared. R

⁵I wait for you, O LORD; | my soul waits;
in your word | is my hope.

**⁶My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch | for the morning,
more than those who keep watch | for the morning.**

⁷O Israel, wait for the LORD, for with the LORD there is | steadfast love;
with the LORD there is plen- | teous redemption.

**⁸For the LORD shall | redeem Israel
from | all their sins. R**

Romans 8:6-11

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.

John 11:1-45

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.

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.

SERMON

Grace to you and peace from Jesus Christ, the Resurrection, who calls us out from dead places, and gives us new life. Amen.

Today is Sunday. And Sunday is the Lord’s Day. Sunday is the day that Christians have been meeting for over two thousand years. And there is a reason we meet on Sunday. It’s not because it’s the Sabbath. God rested on the Sabbath day, on the seventh day of the week. And that’s Saturday. Christians meet on the first day of the week, on Sunday. Because Sunday is the day that Jesus was raised from the dead. Sunday is the day of resurrection. And so every Sunday, even if there is war, or drought, or famine, or plague, Christians raise their voices and proclaim that today is the day. Today is the day that Jesus was raised from the dead. Today is the day that God declared victory over death. Every Sunday, Christians stand in a world filled with death, and we dare to proclaim the promise of resurrection.

And our world needs that promise of resurrection today. Our neighbours need that promise of resurrection today. Our families need that promise of resurrection today. And we need that promise of resurrection today.

And so it is good that our scripture texts today are stories about resurrection. In our Old Testament reading, we hear from the prophet Ezekiel. The valley of dry bones, and God’s promise to breathe new life into those bones. God’s promise to call the people of Israel out of their graves, and give them new life. And in the Gospel of John, the story of Lazarus, who falls ill and dies, and is called out of his grave by the One whose love for him goes beyond the grave... the One who *is* the Resurrection... Jesus Christ.

When Jesus informs his disciples that their friend, their brother, Lazarus has fallen asleep, they say, “Lord if he has fallen asleep, he’ll be OK.” They are in denial. So Jesus has to be blunt with them. “Lazarus is dead.”

Denial is a very human response when we are faced with an overwhelming situation. I’m sure we all have experienced denial recently. A couple weeks ago, I walked into a Bulk Barn with my reusable containers, and the cashier politely informed me that they could not accept those containers because of the COVID-19 situation. And I got upset! I said, “O come on! That’s happening in China... it’s happening in Italy... it’s not happening here!” I was in denial. And two weeks later, with all the changes that have happened around us in what seems like a blink of an eye, I look back at that and say, “And I was upset about Bulk Barn not accepting my containers?”

The promise of resurrection is not a denial of death. It's not a promise that everything will be OK. The promise of resurrection is an answer to death, not a denial of death. So Jesus says, "Let us go to him. Let us go to Judea." And the disciples react in fear. They are afraid, that if they go to Judea, if they go to Lazarus, they too will die. I'm sure that many of us have also experienced a sense of fear recently. Fear is a human emotion. But the promise of resurrection gives us courage to trust in God, courage to seek life, even in the face of fear.

As Jesus is approaching Bethany, Lazarus' sister Martha comes to meet him. Martha is filled with grief. And she says to Jesus, "Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died." When tragedy strikes, there are a lot of "if only's." If only I had stayed home. If only I had washed my hands more diligently. If only we were more prepared. If only. It's a very human thing to say, "If only." But Jesus doesn't make any excuses. Instead he gives Martha a promise. "Your brother will rise again."

Then Martha's sister, Mary finds Jesus. And Jesus sees her grief, and in that moment, he is filled with grief too. Jesus weeps. He weeps for his friend, Lazarus. He weeps for Lazarus' loved ones, for Mary and Martha. He weeps for the suffering and the sorrow that his friends have endured.

The promise of resurrection does not erase suffering. It does not erase grief, or sorrow. When we are filled with grief, Jesus is right there beside us, weeping with us, holding our sorrow in his heart.

When Ezekiel was in the valley, filled with dry bones, God asks him, "Mortal, can these bones live?" And Ezekiel says, "O Lord GOD, you know." And God says to Ezekiel, "Speak to these bones, Ezekiel. Speak to them, and say, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the LORD God to these bones, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. O Israel, I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you home. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

And so Jesus comes to the cave where Lazarus is buried. And the whole town is gathered around the grave. And Mary and Martha are there. And the unspoken question on everyone's hearts is, "Can these bones live?" And Jesus, who *is* Resurrection and Life, gives an answer. Jesus calls Lazarus out of his grave. Jesus calls him by name, and says, "Lazarus, come out!" And Lazarus rises, and comes out. And Jesus says, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Resurrection does not deny the reality of death. Instead, resurrection is **God's answer** to death. Resurrection is God's promise that death shall not have the final word. God's promise of resurrection gives us hope beyond death, hope beyond the grave.

God's promise of resurrection means that, just as Jesus called Lazarus by name, there will come a day when God will open our graves, and Jesus will call each one of us by name, and say, "Donna, come out. Paul, come out. Willi, come out. Elsie, come out. Bonnie, come out. Kim, come out. Randy, come out. Alec, come out. Liz, come out. Vera, come out. John, come out. Rita, come out. Bill, come out. Jeremy, come out."

God will call each one of us by name, and say, “Come out of your graves. Receive my breath into your lungs. Be filled with my Spirit. Be filled with new life!”

This promise of resurrection, this hope that goes beyond the grave, it *transforms* our lives, so that even in the face of death, we hear God’s voice calling to us, calling us out of our graves, calling us to live in the hope and the freedom of new life.

So when we gather together, on Sunday, on the Lord’s Day, and we sing songs, and listen to scripture, and pray together, and share the peace with one another, we proclaim this promise of resurrection to a world in desperate need of hope. Even though we are gathering in our homes, around computer screens and smart phones, we’re still gathering, and Christ is still with us. Christ, who says, “I am the resurrection. Have courage. I have defeated death, so that you may have life, and have it abundantly.” May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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.

Life-giving God, in the midst of this crisis, help your church to witness to your promise of resurrection. Be with all churches and faith communities who are not able to gather for worship. Strengthen us in faith. Grow our love for one another. Help us to share hope with those around us. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Life-giving God, we pray for all who are working on the front lines in this crisis: doctors and nurses, health care aides, emergency first responders. For all who work in health care. Guide them in their work. Protect them and keep them safe. Give them compassion and wisdom. Be with their families. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Life-giving God, be with all who are struggling emotionally during this time. Be with those who are struggling with anxiety and depression, those who are hopeless, those who are struggling with isolation and loneliness. Be with those who are saddened by the loss of life-giving activities, and the cancellation of important events. Be with all who are facing unemployment, lay-offs, or financial distress. Help all of us to reach out to our neighbours, to offer listening ears and helping hands. Help us to support one another during this time of crisis. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Life-giving God, be with all who are affected by the COVID-19 virus. We pray for China, Italy, Spain, France, Iran, and countries all over the world, for the United States, and for Canada. Heal those who are ill. Hold those who are dying close in your loving arms. Comfort those who grieve. Give strength to families whose loved ones have fallen

ill. We pray, O Lord, for a quick and merciful end to this pandemic. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Life-giving God, we pray for all in our faith family who are in need of your healing hand, (*especially...*) We also pray for those who are grieving, especially the family of Bill Risto. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

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

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEST BOARD

NEST (North End Sponsorship Team) is looking for someone to join their board and continue the long relationship NEST has had with ALL. (Pastor Annemarie was our congregational rep.) If interested, please contact Jim Mair at jimmair@shaw.ca or 204-770-4526.

WAYS TO DONATE

Abundant Life Lutheran Church also accepts donations through Canada Helps, link can be found on the main page of our website (look for the big blue button!) Either as a one-time donation or monthly! This option provides tax receipts instantly for your convenience. Another option is by mailing in a cheque or through registering with ALL for Pre-Authorized Remittance (P.A.R) giving. To start the PAR process and find out more information email Lori at office@abundantlifelutheran.ca !

REMINDER – ALL COMMUNICATING IMPORTANT INFO THROUGH EMAIL BLASTS
Reminder for those viewing today's Worship Service through the website: That ALL is now sending out the Sunday Worship Service information through email blasts each week during this self-distancing period of online Worship. Other important information is sent out using the email blast service such as event dates & information, ALL Worship updates, newsletters etc. If you are not receiving them please first check your junk mail and if not there please contact our communications Coordinator, Rick about not receiving emails. If you would like to start receiving these emails, please contact us to be added to the list! Also, a reminder to let us know when you have any contact information changes for our records. Another way to ensure you do not miss any new video updates is to subscribe to our YouTube channel!

TENTATIVE IN-SERVICE DATES

Church service will remain online until further notice, based on Government advisories. Tentative in-service dates as listed below (*SUBJECT TO CHANGE*) Any changes/updates will be sent out via email blast, and posted on website and social media closer to these dates:

- Good Friday – 9:45 AM at Abundant Life Lutheran Church
- Easter Sunday Service – 9:45 AM at Abundant Life Lutheran Church

Contact Information:

Jeremy Langner, Pastor - jeremy@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Kim Scherger, Core Leadership Chair - chair@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Lisa van Dijk, Director of Youth Ministries - splc-youth@live.ca

Rylee Innes, Administrative Secretary - office@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Lori Templeton, Financial Secretary - office@abundantlifelutheran.ca

Rick Scherger, Communications Coordinator - rickscherger@fatecommunications.ca

OFFERING

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a financially stressful time for many people. At the same time, in order to continue the ministry of our church, we are relying on our members to continue to give regularly. Please consider how you are able to continue to support our church during this time. There are many ways to give to our church, even if we aren't meeting in person:

- Consider signing up for PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance)
 - to sign up for PAR, please email office@abundantlifelutheran.ca for more information
- Donating online through the “Online offering” button on our website
- Sending weekly or monthly cheques in the mail to:

Abundant Life Lutheran Church
3486 Raleigh Street
East St. Paul, MB R2E 1B9

We are thankful for your continued support!

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Jeremy's Hours

Tuesday 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Wednesday 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Note: Pastor Jeremy will be out of the office the week of March 30th – April 2nd. Back in the office Friday, April 3rd. During that time Rev. Jennifer Marlor will be available for Pastoral care. She may be contacted at 778-874-8249 or mailrevj@gmail.com

Administrative Secretary Hours

Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM.

To arrange appointment please email or phone: office@abundantlifelutheran.ca / 204-255-5433.

Note: Rylee is back in the office commencing week of March 30th.

REACHING OUT

Are you in distress? Here are a few numbers that you may find helpful.

911 Emergency

Dial 911

Winnipeg Police Service Non-Emergency Line

1-204-986-6222

Health Links (Info Sante)

204-788-8200 or toll-free 1-888-315-9257.

Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba

24-7 support line for anyone experiencing anxiety: 204-925-0600

Klinic Crisis Line

204-786-8686 or 1-888-322-3019

TTY 204-784-4097

Manitoba Suicide Line "Reason to Live"

1-877-435-7170 (1-877-HELP170)

Kids Help Phone (national line available to Manitoba Youth)

1-800-668-6868

Klinic Sexual Assault Crisis Line

204-786-8631 or 1-888-292-7565

TTY 204-784-4097