

New Hope Lutheran Church

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March 29, 2020
5th Sunday in Lent

**ALL EVENTS FOR THE COMING
WEEK HAVE BEEN CANCELLED**

Please remember to send in your offering.

Prayer of the Day

Lord Jesus, Your presence cannot be quarantined. You meet us at kitchen tables and in living rooms, just as surely as you meet us in the buildings where we worship. By your unbounded presence, draw us close to one another. Comfort us with your promise to be with us always and inspire us with courage and with love. Amen.
(thanks to Rev. Deborah Ann Taylor, pastor at Bethel Lutheran Church, Camrose AB)

IN OUR PRAYERS

Aline Hay, Fred Lahti,
Pentti Puusaari, Esme Rintala,
Martha Tapanila, Derek, Maria
and Kai Erkkilä.

Lenten Soup-er Time
Apr 1 cancelled **CC**

To be evaluated April 1

Maundy Thursday

Apr 9 4:00 Finnish **Sud**
Apr 9 7:00 English **CC**

Good Friday

Apr 10 10:00 English **CC**
Apr 10 11:15 Finnish **Sud**

First Reading Ezekiel 37:1 – 14

1 The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know." 4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5 This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. 6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. 9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. 11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'" 12 Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. 14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'

Psalm 130

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;
2 Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.
3 If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?
4 But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.
5 I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.
6 I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.
7 Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.
8 He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Second Reading Romans 8:6 – 11

6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Gospel John 11:1 – 45

1 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." 4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for

Gospel John 11:1 – 45 (continued)

4 God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." 8 "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?" 9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light." 11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up." 12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. 14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." 16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." 17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home. 21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." 23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." 24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" 27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." 28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there. 32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then 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 have kept this man from dying?" 38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me." 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go." 45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

The 5th Sunday in Lent
New Hope Lutheran – March 29, 2020
“A Place for Hope”

In both our 1st and gospel lessons we have situations that begin on a rather hopeless note, as death is their premise. But in both cases we are shown that life coming from death is always possible when God is allowed to enter into the equation. Hopelessness can be turned into hope.

I suspect we all have, at times, lived with hopelessness and the despair it brings. The times we live in today may feel like one of them. We may be feeling utterly hopeless and it appears there is nothing more you can do about it. And along with such hopelessness, we may feel helpless.

It's easy to feel hopeless in those times when we find devastation in our lives, or in events around the world. Even when we aren't directly involved in something we can meander into hopelessness. What are we to do, for example, about the numerous accounts of violence and poverty, and injustice, and oppression around the world, not to mention a virus that can hit any of us? Usually we simply don't want to think about it because to think about it too much gives us a sense of utter hopelessness. There appears to be too much to be done. We can't do this on our own. What hope do we have?

The forces of evil love our hopelessness though, and even encourage it because when it overwhelms us, we feel totally helpless – and that easily leads us to not do anything about it – or even avoid trying to help others, or do anything about our own situation. As one person, we ask ourselves, what can I do? We can easily feel like we are in the midst of a valley full of bones, or face to face with a fresh grave. It's too much.

But what if we were to look at it in another way? How many folks for example, begin the winter knowing that they will need to spend a certain amount of money to heat their homes? If you add it all up at the beginning, it can sound like a lot of money, a crushing amount of cash. So – when faced with such an overwhelming amount - do people give up because of the crushing amount of funds required?

The same goes with spreading hope in the midst of overwhelming odds. I know when we look at all the events in the world, we cannot just write a single cheque and it will all be made better. Relief comes a little at a time, and then we move on to the next challenge. If we tire of all the people that need help, it's the same as saying that after the first winter fuel payment of the season is paid that we are now done and won't purchase any more heating fuel.

And this is where we need hope to come into the equation. So often the world and its ways do not give us much cause for hope. As seen in our lessons, however, God will always bring us hope, which allows us in turn to give others hope. Our purpose, our mission, is to come together to bring others hope in a world that is often hopeless.

Today's lessons show us how hope is found, even in the midst of overwhelming odds. First of all, we are to call on God. The sisters of Lazarus called Jesus to come when their brother Lazarus was ill. They expected something to happen and, while they were at first disappointed, what came out of it all was a miracle much greater than they would have ever imagined. You see, when Jesus said he is the resurrection and the life, he wasn't kidding around.

And that brings me to another point. Don't approach God with preconceived notions of what you expect to happen. We often limit ourselves (and what we think God is capable of) when we feel that hope can only come from one direction, and so we only ask for one thing. The sisters in our gospel, for instance only wanted their brother healed; they certainly did not expect him to come back from the dead! God has answers and events that go beyond what we can imagine. What we need to do is allow God to guide us and bring us back to a place of hope.

St. Augustine wrote: “*Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.*” When we live our lives with a holy and certain hope in God, not only do we benefit, but others benefit because of the love of God we spread to others. When even death can be beaten, there is always a place for hope. Amen.

*The Lutheran World Federation has provided Intercessory Prayer
in the midst of the spread of COVID-19*

O God our Healer, show your compassion for the whole human family that is in turmoil and burdened with illness and with fear. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Come to our aid as the coronavirus spreads globally, heal those who are sick, support and protect their families and friends from being infected. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Grant us your spirit of love and self-discipline so that we may come together, working to control and eliminate the coronavirus. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Make us vigilant, attentive, and proactive in the eradication of all diseases, malaria, dengue, HIV & AIDS, and others [may be named outloud or in silence]... that create suffering and often result in death for many people. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Heal our self-centeredness and indifference that makes us worry only when the virus threatens us, open ways beyond timidity and fear that too easily ignore our neighbor. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Strengthen and encourage those in public health services and in the medical profession: care-givers, nurses, attendants, doctors, all who commit themselves to caring for the sick and their families. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Inspire, give insight and hope to all researchers focused on developing a vaccine. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Sustain all workers and business owners who suffer loss of livelihood due to shut-downs, quarantines, closed borders, and other restrictions... protect and guard all those who must travel. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Guide the leaders of the nations that they speak the truth, halt the spread of misinformation and act with justice so that all your family may know healing. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Heal our world, heal our bodies, strengthen our hearts and our minds, and in the midst of turmoil, give us hope and peace. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Hold in your gentle embrace all who have died and who will die this day. Comfort their loved ones in their despair. Hear our cry, O God, Listen to our prayer.

Remember all your family, the entire human race, and all your creation, in your love. Amen!