

March 29, 2020 – 10:00 am



The Raising of Lazarus

**ST. JOHN
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
AN OPEN AND AFFIRMING CONGREGATION**

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COME OUT! ON THE BREATH OF GOD

Service Prayers for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

CALL TO WORSHIP:

The prophet asks: Can our soul-weary bones live again?

O God, you know!

We ask: Can we dance again after mourning, loss and grief? **O God, you know!**

The gift is sure and unmistakable:

God's breath poured out as new life for weary souls!

Let us celebrate the gift of God's new life,

And come to worship God in laughter and dancing!

PRAYER OF INVOCATION:

Compassionate God, the wind of your Spirit is the very sign of life for all who long for you.

One breath from you and we are rescued from the arid valley of dry bones, given muscles and sinews and joy with which to praise you, and filled with the holy hope you grant to all your faithful children.

Let our whole lives be filled with the life-breath of the Spirit, that what has lain dormant may burst into bloom, and what looks to us to be death may be revealed as but sleep before the emergence of new life. **Amen.**

GOSPEL READING: John 11:1-45 The raising of Lazarus

MESSAGE: I've always had a few questions about this story. When Jesus hears of the illness of his friend, Lazarus, Jesus said (verse 4, CEB), "This illness isn't fatal. It's for the glory of God so that God's Son can be glorified through it." In verse 14, Jesus told the disciples plainly, "Lazarus has died. For your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there so that you can believe."

Those words sound a little harsh to me. Jesus even waited an extra 2 days before going to see Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha. It sounds to me like Jesus was waiting for Lazarus to die so he could teach the disciples and the two sisters "a lesson." However, as usual, there is more to the story than we see at first glance.

Our Adult Sunday School class will tell you that I have a few problems with the word "glory". I just don't quite understand how it is used in the Bible. That's another reason I have questions about verse 4, "It's for

the glory of God so that God's Son can be glorified through it." So, I looked up the meaning of the word "glory" as it is used Biblically. At classroom.synonym.com I found some words to assist me in fully appreciating what's happening in the lesson in John 11:1-45.

"The most common use of the word 'glory' in the Bible is to describe the splendor, holiness and majesty of God. Glory, in this sense, is often associated with a **person experiencing God's presence in a tangible way.** When used this way, the word glory conveys a sense of heavy dignity."

From this definition, I can see more clearly what Jesus is doing. By raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus is allowing the disciples and all others at the grave to believe the revelation of the presence of God. **They can experience God's presence in a tangible way.** Not only that, but this event reveals the glory of God's son. The situation is not only one of a sick friend; Lazarus's illness is an occasion for the **revelation of the presence of God in Jesus.**

Since the beginning of Lent, and probably earlier, during our Sunday meditations, we've been searching for who Jesus is. We've looked for clues in the scripture texts every week. This week is no exception. Jesus is teaching, healing, and demonstrating that he is indeed God's Son. Jesus and God are One. It is a shocking revelation for some. How can this man, who looks like any other human man, actually be God?? The answer is in Bible stories like this one where we have the privilege of **experiencing God's presence in a tangible way.**

As we experience this time of “shelter in place” to avoid the spread of this Corona virus, we may feel that the “world is coming to an end.” However, in stories like the raising of Lazarus, **even in the face of death, Jesus brings life.** “This story is a metaphor for the kind of life that Jesus offers all believers. This is not a life that is otherworldly, but one that abides in the grief and loss of this world. And yet it is a life that also overcomes death, against which the power of the grave does not have the final word.” (O’Day 112).

As always, God is with us, even as we distance ourselves from family and friends. God is there.

Amen.

HYMN: ‘Come, Ye Faithful Raise the Strain’

Public Domain Words by St. John of Damascus / Music by Sir Arthur S. Sullivan

Come, ye faithful, raise the strain
Of triumphant gladness!
God hath brought His Israel
Into joy from sadness;
Loosed from Pharaoh’s bitter yoke
Jacob’s sons and daughters,
Led them with unmoistened foot
Thru the Red Sea waters.

Now the queen of seasons, bright
With the day of splendor,
With the royal feast of feasts,
Comes its joy to render;
Comes to glad Jerusalem,
Who with true affection

Welcomes in unwearied strains
Jesus' resurrection.

Neither might the gates of death,
Nor the tomb's dark portal,
Nor the watchers, nor the seal,
Hold Thee as a mortal;
But today amidst the Twelve
Thou didst stand, bestowing
That Thy peace, which evermore
Passeth human knowing.

MORNING PRAYERS: Pray for all those affected by the Coronavirus; those who are sick and those who have died. Those who have lost their jobs. Those without food. We especially pray for all the doctors, nurses, technicians, scientists, epidemiologists, and those searching for a vaccine. They care for others, even while putting themselves at risk. We pray for all the truck drivers who bring all the items we need to survive this. *Add your personal prayers.*

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

BENEDICTION:

Come out! Jesus commands,
And calls us from the tombs of our existence
into the brightness of a new day.

Come out! Jesus cries,
And unbinds us from the chains of our past.

Come out! Jesus calls,

And entices us into a world filled with grace and possibility.

So: Go out!

Into a world that needs our life, our breath, our spirit!

Go out!

Into a world that needs the Spirit of God,
carried on our lips and in our loving arms.



Go out!

Into the world to live as God's resurrected people!

Go out! and go on the breath of God's holy wind!

Amen.

Come Out! On the Breath of God, Service Prayers for the fifth Sunday of Lent was written by the Rev. Elizabeth Dilley, Minister and Team Leader for MESA, Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization Team.

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FOR FURTHER STUDY: The other scripture texts for today include Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11.

PLEASE DON'T FORGET YOUR MONTHLY OFFERINGS.

Perhaps ask your bank if you can do a monthly withdrawal sent to the church. Then you don't have to think about it anymore.

Peace and Blessings, Pastor Rosemary



PRAYER LIST: *Today we lift up in prayer* Chuck & Sharon Kistler.

And prayers for healing:

Dave Seneczyn, Eric White, Lori Riess, Charles Chamberlin, Donna Isselhard, Mitch Nallie, Becky Ballard, Candy Pearce, Greg Talley, Carol Meyer, Leah Williams, Pat Holtgrave, Jane Riess, DeAnne Weiss, Rich Schmitt, Les Sattery, Sherie Klostermann, Bill Underwood, Hunter Brink, Shari Hamilton, Charlotte Watson

Shut-ins: Terry Kissel, Ardella Morris, Alice Stidham

Prayer list for

March 29-April 5, 2020

Churches & Pastors

- Pana United in Faith
- Pinckneyville St. Paul UCC, Rev. Cynthia (Rev. Kerry) Bean

Retired Pastors

- Rev. Elmer and Linda Bowman, Jr., Trenton, IL

Instead of an April Newsletter, (since April activities are unknown) here are our birthdays and anniversaries.

April Birthdays:

4/1	Trisann Underwood	4/18	Tom Miller
4/2	Brenna Cohlmeier	4/24	Stacie Pickens
4/11	Madison Brown	4/27	Becky Riess

April Anniversaries:

4/26 Tiffani & Brad Eisenhauer # 17

Funeral:

The service for Roger Fox was held on Tuesday, March 10. Our condolences to Jo and his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.