



## New Life in the Wilderness: Fifth Sunday in Lent

### Worship of Word and Sacrament \* March 29, 2020 \* 9 AM

*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 unfulfilling promise in our baptism.*

## The Gathering: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

*As we gather for worship, the pastor will pour water into the font to remind us of being gathered into the body of Christ through baptism.*

### **Gathering Meditation: The Wilderness is a Place of New Life – Resilient Life**

I used to think the wilderness would never end.

I called my mom and asked— “Does time really heal all wounds? Do the pieces ever fall back into place? Does the wilderness go on forever?”

So she told me about the horizon.

She said, “There is an edge, Where the earth meets the sky. And when you're there, you will see daisies in the sidewalk and the sun after the rain.”

I asked her to draw me a map and she cried, because she knew this road was mine to walk, but she promised to wait for me, day in and day out, for as long as the wilderness raged.

So I walked. And it felt like forty days and it hurt like forty nights. And I waved to the people I passed there in the wilderness. We tipped our hats to one another, silently recognizing the weight we each carried, until one day, I realized— The earth always kisses the sky.

And this wilderness has turned into a garden, and I have made it out alive. And my mother hugged me, there at the earth's edge. And she whispered in my ear, that God was that gardener, and that I had nothing to fear.

So if you ever ask for a map, know that God and I will be planting seeds, hoping to turn your wilderness into a garden. For as long as the wilderness rages on, I will never stop looking for you where the earth kisses the sky.

### **Call to Worship:**

P: We have been in the wilderness— **C: Discerning and working, seeking and dreaming.**

D: We have been in the wilderness— **C: Grieving and wondering, praying and hoping.**

P: We have been in the wilderness— **C: Longing and running, creating and waiting.**

D: We have been in the wilderness, but we have not been alone; for God walks with us, every step of the way.

**C: So let us worship the God of our darkest nights and our brightest days.**

**Song of Preparation: Psalm 130 (I Wait) Robbie Seay Band**

*This psalm is part of our appointed readings. It speaks to knowing God is within even in the wilderness. You are invited to read the psalm or just sit and breath into the music as the video plays.*

I wait for you/ My soul waits for you  
Oh my Lord, In your word I hope and wait  
I wait for you/ My soul waits for you  
Oh my Lord, In your word I hope and wait  
From the debts I cry/ To you Oh God  
Hear my cry/ In you alone I wait  
Oh in you alone I wait/

I wait for you/ My soul waits for you  
Oh my Lord In your word I hope and wait  
From the depths I cry to you oh God  
Hear my cry/ In you alone I wait  
Oh in you alone I wait

*We are gathered in song and prayer that tells of the day's message.*

From the depths I cry to you oh God  
Hear my cry/ In you alone I wait  
Oh in you alone I wait

***Prayer of the Day***

D Let us pray together... Gracious God,

**C You invite us to plant a garden of love and harmony, but we grow weeds of prejudice and hatred. You invite us to sow joy and gratitude, but we scatter seeds of greed and envy. You call us to tend the soil of fear and denial, but instead we close our eyes and let the earth suffer. Forgive us. You invited us to plant a garden, and we lost ourselves in the wilderness. Clear our hearts. Breathe life into these weary bones and grant us a fresh start. Gratefully we pray, Amen.**

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## The Word: God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.

***A Reading from Ezekiel 37:1-14***

***CEB OT p. 817***

Valley of dry bones

37 The LORD's power overcame me, and while I was in the LORD's spirit, he led me out and set me down in the middle of a certain valley. It was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me through them all around, and I saw that there were a great many of them on the valley floor, and they were very dry.

<sup>3</sup>He asked me, "Human one, can these bones live again?"

I said, "LORD God, only you know."

<sup>4</sup>He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the LORD's word! <sup>5</sup>The LORD God proclaims to these bones: I am about to put breath in you, and you will live again. <sup>6</sup>I will put sinews on you, place flesh on you, and cover you with skin. When I put breath in you, and you come to life, you will know that I am the LORD."

<sup>7</sup>I prophesied just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the bones came together, bone by bone. <sup>8</sup>When I looked, suddenly there were sinews on them. The flesh appeared, and then they were covered over with skin. But there was still no breath in them.

<sup>9</sup>He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, human one! Say to the breath, The LORD God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live."

<sup>10</sup>I prophesied just as he commanded me. When the breath entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, an extraordinarily large company.

<sup>11</sup>He said to me, "Human one, these bones are the entire house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely finished.' <sup>12</sup>So now, prophesy and say to them, The LORD God proclaims: I'm opening your graves! I will raise you up from your graves, my people, and I will bring you to Israel's fertile land. <sup>13</sup>You will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, my people.

<sup>14</sup>I will put my breath in you, and you will live. I will plant you on your fertile land, and you will know that I am the LORD. I've spoken, and I will do it. This is what the LORD says."

R The word of God for the people of God.

**C Thanks be to God**

11 A certain man, Lazarus, was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (<sup>2</sup> This was the Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped his feet with her hair. Her brother Lazarus was ill.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, saying, "Lord, the one whom you love is ill."

<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, "This illness isn't fatal. It's for the glory of God so that God's Son can be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> Jesus loved Martha, her sister, and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> When he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed where he was. After two days, <sup>7</sup> he said to his disciples, "Let's return to Judea again."

<sup>8</sup> The disciples replied, "Rabbi, the Jewish opposition wants to stone you, but you want to go back?"

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Aren't there twelve hours in the day? Whoever walks in the day doesn't stumble because they see the light of the world. <sup>10</sup> But whoever walks in the night does stumble because the light isn't in them."

<sup>11</sup> He continued, "Our friend Lazarus is sleeping, but I am going in order to wake him up."

<sup>12</sup> The disciples said, "Lord, if he's sleeping, he will get well." <sup>13</sup> They thought Jesus meant that Lazarus was in a deep sleep, but Jesus had spoken about Lazarus' death.

<sup>14</sup> Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died. <sup>15</sup> For your sakes, I'm glad I wasn't there so that you can believe. Let's go to him."

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas (the one called Didymus) said to the other disciples, "Let us go too so that we may die with Jesus."

Jesus with Martha and Mary

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Bethany was a little less than two miles from Jerusalem. <sup>19</sup> Many Jews had come to comfort Martha and Mary after their brother's death. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary remained in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. <sup>22</sup> Even now I know that whatever you ask God, God will give you."

<sup>23</sup> Jesus told her, "Your brother will rise again."

<sup>24</sup> Martha replied, "I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the last day."

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though they die. <sup>26</sup> Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

<sup>27</sup> She replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, God's Son, the one who is coming into the world."



**Prayers of the People**

*Please send your concerns and joys via chat to share with the community that has assembled.*  
D 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.

D God of life, bind your faithful people into one body. Enliven the church with your Spirit and bless the work of those who work for its renewal like Hans Nielsen Hauge, whom we commemorate today. Accomplish your work of salvation in us and through us, for the sake of the world. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

D God of life, you love the world you have made and you grieve when creation suffers. Restore polluted lands and waterways. Heal areas of the world ravaged by storms, floods, wildfires, droughts, or other natural disasters. Bring all things to new life. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

D God of life, show redemption to all who watch and wait with eager expectation: those longing for wars to cease, those waiting for immigration paperwork to finalize, those seeking election, and those in dire need of humanitarian relief. Come quickly with your hope. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

D God of life, you weep with those who grieve. Unbind all who are held captive by anxiety, despair, or pain. Fill us with compassion and empathy for those who struggle, and keep us faithful in prayer. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

D God of life, we give thanks for opportunities for this congregation to collaborate with our community in caring for the needs of our neighbors. We pray especially for the Sparta Ecumenical Food Pantry, The Faith Kitchen in Dover, Manna House in Newton, and Family Promise. Strengthen our ties with other local congregations, agencies, and services. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

D God of life, you are our resurrection. We remember all those who have died and trust that, in you, they will live again (*especially*). Breathe new life into our dry bones, that we, too, might live with you forever. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

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

**C Amen.**

**Sharing the Peace**

P The peace of the Christ be with you all.

**C And also with you.**

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## The Thanksgiving: We offer thanks for the gifts God has given us.

*Please read the announcement insert for alternate giving options.*

**Receiving the Offering:** We can't physically receive an offering from you all today.

If you are Simply Giving family, thank you.

If you usually give on Sundays, please mail your offering to Shepherd of the Hills, 246 Woodport Rd, Sparta, NJ 07871.

You may choose to give electronically through 1. our online portal at [www.sothnj.org](http://www.sothnj.org) or

2. By texting the amount you wish to give to **973-832-0226**. You will receive a message that will help you complete this transaction. You can make a one-time gift or set it up for regular offerings.

**Offering Prayer**

D Let us pray... God of wonder, you formed us in our mother's womb, and from mother earth you bring forth this bread and wine. We place them on your table, together with our lives and all that you have made. Open the heavens to us and pour out your Spirit. We wait for your mercy; we long for your peace; we hunger and thirst for Jesus Christ, our banquet of life. **C Amen.**

**Prayer of Thanksgiving**

D Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God,

**C we give you thanks and praise.**

D By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God,

**C we give you thanks and praise.**

D Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God,

**C we give you thanks and praise.**

D Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who taught us to pray...

**Lord's Prayer**

***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen***

## The Sending: God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

*With the blessing of God, we go out to live as Christ's body in the world.*

**Benediction:**

P Now is the acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation. Holy God, speaking, spoken, and inspiring, ✠ bless you, unbind you, and send you in love and in peace. **C Amen.**

**Sending Song:** Lord of All Hopefulness

**WP 765**

**Dismissal:**

*We are sent out to continue to our role in God's mission.*

D Go in peace. Share the Good News.

**C Thanks be to God.**

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