

**March 29, 2020 [Purple]**

**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

Ezekiel 37:1–14

Psalm 130 (UMH 848)

Romans 8:6–11

John 11:1–45

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## **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

### **The Valley of Dry Bones**

3The 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 round 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.'

7 So 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, prophecy, 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.

11 Then 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 prophecy, 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.'

## **Romans 8:6–11**

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.

9 But 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**

### **The Death of Lazarus**

11Now 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.

7 Then 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.'

### **Jesus the Resurrection and the Life**

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for 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.'

### **Jesus Weeps**

28 When 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?'

### **Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life**

38 Then 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 for 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 upwards 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.'

### **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

## **03/29/2020 Fifth Sunday in Lent - Readers' Theater: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS AT THE CROSS: MARY, MARTHA & LAZARUS**

### **ARTISTIC ELEMENTS**

**The traditional color for today is: Purple, but I have added "character" colors for this worship**

### **FABRIC:**

Cover the worship center with purple fabric, draping it to the floor but not puddling the fabric. Beginning on the left side of the worship center, place the drapes of Satan (black), Nicodemus (purple), the woman at the well (red), and the man born blind (navy blue), so that they overlap slightly. You will need to make sure that there will be room for the colors of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus on the worship center.

*[Note: This particular setting will require three people, one portraying each of the characters listed above. The color for Mary will be a light beige (symbolizing constancy); the color for Martha will be bright yellow (symbolizing hope); the color for Lazarus will be bright green (symbolizing new life). Each of these characters will wear their color and at the end of the presentation will drape their color over the arm of the cross.]*

### **Narrator:**

*Jesus had been informed that one of his most beloved friends, Lazarus, was gravely ill. But he insisted that this illness would not lead to death but would be used by God as a witness to the Son of God. But word came to Jesus that Lazarus had died and all were saddened by the news. Jesus insisted that this was the time to go to the home of Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus. Before Jesus arrived, Martha got word that he was on his way, and she hurried out to meet him.*

### **Martha:**

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.

### **Jesus:**

Your brother will rise again.

### **Martha:**

I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

### **Jesus:**

I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me even though they die will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?

### **Martha:**

Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.

### **Narrator:**

*And having said this, Martha returned home to tell Mary that she had spoken with Jesus, who was on his way to see them. Mary got up quickly and ran out of the house to see Jesus.*

### **Mary:**

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

**Jesus:**

Where have you laid him?

**Mary:**

Lord, come and see.

**Narrator:**

*They led Jesus to the tomb in which Lazarus had been laid. All those who followed Mary and Jesus were amazed and moved by his love for his friend Lazarus. When they arrived at the cave, Jesus gave them instruction.*

**Jesus:**

Take away the stone.

**Martha:**

Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.

**Jesus:**

Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?

**Narrator:**

*And so they rolled the stone away.*

**Jesus:**

Father, I thank you for having heard me. I know 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. Lazarus, come out!

**Narrator:**

*And Lazarus came out, his hands and feet bound with the strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth.*

**Jesus:**

Unbind him, and let him go.

**Narrator:**

*Many of the people who had come with Mary and Martha to the tomb had seen what had happened and they believed in Jesus.*

*[Martha, Mary, and Lazarus place their cloths on the arm of the cross and they depart]*

## LENT 5 REFLECTION: Seeds Contain the Past and the Future

### SUNFLOWER SEEDLINGS [GROWING] [03-29]

As we have journeyed through this season of Lent, our seeds, now seedlings, have taught us we must first **take action**, as we plant our seeds that are so filled with potential and possibilities, and then **develop patience and acceptance** that to mature in different ways at different times is the only true normal. We must embrace this lesson of growth diversity as we wait, for God's perfect time to bring each of us to flower and fruition.

**As we continue to care for our little seed pots, we can now see our seeds are no longer seeds, or even, fresh seedlings; they have become small plants with leaves of their own!**

Looking at our plant – as it grows from seed to maturity – **we find that it is hard to believe we are looking at the same plant.**

Last week we considered that while seed-to-plant growth follows a smooth process, it proceeds through distinct stages **marked by unique characteristics and are a measure for the relative health and well-being of the plant at any given time.**

Looking at our seedlings, it is easy to see that our spiritual development progresses through stages as well:

- **Belief and inquiry deepen to devotion and discipleship.**
- **Learning and following evolve into teaching and leading.**
- **Growth within the community of faith matures to a life of service in the world.**

**We move through ages and stages of faith development as we grow from seed to seedling and eventually become a fruit-bearing tree!**

This week, we consider that **each seed is the product of previous generations and contains within it all the genetic code for the future:**

- **Seeds are filled with the information that yields transformation – fully equipped for growth if their potential is acted upon.**
- **Each generation builds upon the last and lays the foundation for the next generation.**



**So likewise, as Disciples, the Word of God is the information we contain — passed down throughout the ages and preserved in us for the future — that holds the power to transform us.**

**When we give ourselves time to grow, we unleash the God-given power to become mature Christian disciples.**

**Still we must take action!**

**This week we consider the lesson of fruition... as well as, the lessons of maturity, patience, and growth diversity as we wait, for God's perfect time to bring each of us to flower and fruition.**

The lessons of the seed help us see Lent, not as a time of sacrifice and denial, but as a time of preparation and anticipation — **preparation for the work to which God calls us and anticipation of the fullness of life that God promises.**

**Keep Growing!**

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Based in part on a Lenten Reflection by Rev. Dan R. Dick, a former staff member of the Discipleship Ministries, with further insights by Rev. Heidi R. Chamberlain, pastor of Malone: Centenary UMC during Lent 2020.