

Home Service for March 22, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

In the quiet, we wait for you, O God. We hope for your transforming love. In the darkness of despair, we trust that you are here.

Call to Worship:

Everything seems dead. There is no life anywhere.

Our hopes have perished. We see no future.

Send the power of your spirit upon us. Breathe new life into us.

We wait for your transforming love. We hope. We wait. We trust.

Opening Prayer:

Come, Spirit of God. We wait for your presence. We trust in your abiding promises. Breathe the breath of your power into us this day, that we may experience the power of new life, the promise of forgiveness, and blessing of community. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Sometimes the night seems so long. We lie there, waiting for morning, waiting for the first glimpse of light. In the same way, we wait for you, O God. We long to know that you are there and that you care about us. Help us trust your faithful love. Encourage us as we wait for your promises. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

Jesus promises, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever trusts in me will live." Let us trust the promise of new life.

Read Psalm 130

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.

Prayers of the People:

Lord, we have come a long way on this journey. For so many of us, we know where the scriptural road will take us; and we will walk triumphantly into Jerusalem, eat a supper meal with Jesus, and watch as he is taken from the garden and brought before the authorities. We will weep at the foot of the cross as he speaks words of love and forgiveness, and we will wail at the tomb. We do not like this part of the journey and would just as soon skip it. But here we have the story of his friend, Lazarus, who has died. His sisters, Mary and Martha, have confidence that he could have been healed, but they do not think that he can be raised from the dead. That is part of our problem. We want to have confidence in the healing restorative power of Jesus, but we cannot escape our fear of the arch enemy, death. Jesus' proclamation of eternal life is real. We need to let go of our fear, for life in eternity is also God's promise - a home with God. Can we come out of our darkness? Can we risk believing in Jesus? Those are hard questions and cannot be answered without the trip to Jerusalem, to the cross and to the tomb. God, please be with us on this journey. AMEN.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Ezekiel 37:1-14

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, “Prophesy 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^[a] 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, “Prophesy 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.’”

Read the Epistle: Romans 8:6-11

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^[a] 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 ^[b] his Spirit who lives in you.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 11:1-45

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 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^[a]) 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 ^[b] 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.

Message

We have all known the cry of a family suffering the loss of a loved one, because each of us have had personal experience in such losses. That is the same cry of Mary and Martha at the loss of their dear brother. Also, the cry of Jesus when he hears the news of Lazarus' death, for the Greek word used means "gut wrenching". Anyone who has lost a close loved one knows the pain, knows how death reaches up from the grave and seeks to almost suffocate us. Death seems to be everywhere. For we seem not to be able to stop hearing about death with each edition of the newspaper and with each news program we watch on television. There is death near and far, all around the world for it seems impossible to not hear about it. Death is at work, every day we get one day closer to our own. Someday our family's grief will be because of our death. In addition to that the fear of death can paralyze us if we let it and that fear can lead to the avoidance of life.

Our gospel lesson this morning is the familiar story of Lazarus being raised from the dead. In this story we see the faith of Martha, the grief of Jesus, the frankness of Martha as she says there will be an odor. This story is used at funerals for it gives us a glimpse of the resurrection that is to come for all those who believe in Jesus as the Saviour of the world. This is a story of hope as Martha hopes that when Jesus arrived at the village he would do something about Lazarus. It is the story of hope, even in the midst of despair.

Martha had the hope that did not cover up the fact that her brother had died, but she had hope that in her grief, Jesus would act. Hope does not cover up what has occurred, but it gives a promise of something better to come.

Martha had the hope that something would happen when because Jesus came. She said: "And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Martha had hope. She did not know exactly what Jesus had planned, but she had hope that something would happen. Then Jesus gives a glimpse of what was going to happen as the text states: Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha's answer was, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She answered, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world."

Jesus takes Martha's hope and turns it into action. Jesus gives Martha a hint of what is going to happen when he says: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in

me shall never die.” Martha is thinking about the resurrection at the end of time and Jesus is talking about the resurrection now through him and for all those who believe in him. Diffently a communication problem.

Jesus then asks where they had laid the body. Notice that Martha did not totally believe for she felt the need to warn that there will be an odor when the stone is removed as Lazarus had been dead for four days. But Jesus asks for the stone to be removed and then he calls for Lazarus as the text says: “he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out.’”

Can you just imagine the surprise of the many who had gathered, when Lazarus walked out of the tomb. They removed the grave clothes around him and then we are told that many believed in Jesus. This story is a glimpse of what was to come on Easter which was a few weeks away. This is the prelude to the Easter story, a foreshadowing of what was to come. For the story of Lazarus is a story of hope, a story of resurrection, a story of who Jesus really is, the son of God.

Our Gospel is telling us that out of discouragement comes hope. Martha and May were discouraged for they both told Jesus if you would have been here our brother would not have died, but even in that discouragement they had hope. Martha said to Jesus, “If you would have been here my brother would not have died.” And Jesus responds by saying, “I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me though he die, yet shall he live.” And eventually, Jesus found the tomb where his friend Lazarus was buried, he asked for the stone to be removed, then he called, “Lazarus, come out.” And out of death, out of the stench of a body that had been dead for four days came Lazarus.

For you and me, as we live with our discouragement, our despair, our hurts, our pain, Jesus says to us be still and know that I am God, just like God said to the psalmist long ago in Psalm 46, “Be still, and know that I am God. I am exalted among, the nations, I am exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”

We all face discouragement in this life, and it is at those times we need to turn to the Lord and believe that somehow He will act. But we also need to be ready to accept how He acts. For He does not always act in the way we would want, but we must believe that it is for the best and remember that He can make good out of all things. Only through faith and trust have I discovered Christ’s will is always for the best, for I have seen this with my own life.

This story of the raising of Lazarus gives us hope for the future. Jesus weeps for Lazarus as he shows us that he understands the human condition of sorrow and

grief. But out of the sorrow and grief comes hope for a new life, hope for the courage to go on in the midst of our grief.

The German theologian Jurgen Moltmann expresses in a single sentence a summary of human history, past, present, and future: “God weeps with us so that we may someday laugh with him.” Yes, God weeps with us as we face all those things that separate us from the love of God in the world and then we have the hope that at the end of our time we will rest in the resurrection and laugh with God and Jesus about all that has happened to us during our journey on this earth.

It is in facing the reality of death that we know that God is not bound by death and neither are we. May we never forget or lose sight of the fact that Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.” Amen.

Benediction:

Where there seems to be no life, God breathes new life.

Where there is no hope, God comes with new possibilities.

Go forth into the world, knowing that God is at work in every place.

Feel the breath of God blowing peace and new life into our kingdom building.

Amen.