

# Church at Home

*for Sunday March 29, 2020*

## *The Fifth Sunday of Lent*

God of Love and Mercy,

As we gather in your name this day, remind us that we are not alone; that others are with us, praying together, considering your promises together, and looking toward you for hope and healing. Hear, now, our prayers for one another.

Protect and heal us, our friends, families, the Olivet community, and people throughout Your world. Strengthen us for service, and bring each of us peace as we take this time out of our Sunday to meet with you, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that binds us together. AMEN!

The following lessons are assigned in the Universal Common Lectionary for today. As you read these verses from scripture be mindful that Christians all over the world will be reading these same passages and seeking hope with you. Ponder how the words apply to your own life today. I invite you to find a quiet place, alone or with whomever you gather—near a window, or even outside if that works in your setting, and read through each passage. Then, consider your response to the questions posed. Then, make use the prayer provided, better yet, offer up one of your own. **Today, we have included a link to a video sermon to watch after reading the Gospel...see below.**

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

*The 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. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus, says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I 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." 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. I 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. Then 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." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. 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.' Therefore 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. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I 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.*

Consider for a few moments your own physical existence: Breathe in...breathe out. Look at your hands, and your wrists...Notice your own skin...and veins...and bones. Now move your hands and notice how amazing it is that you can coordinate your fingers. Think about all the things that you are able to do with your hands; type, cook, garden, build, draw, paint, hold a book, sew, drive, hold someone else's hand.

What does it mean for you today to recognize that God is the creator of not just the whole world, but you, and all the fine detail?

Take a moment to thank God for life itself.

In verse 10 it says, "and the breath came into them (the dry bones), and they lived, and stood on their feet". As we face the threat of an illness that can make it difficult to breathe, we are reminded that our capacity to breathe was given to us from God. Breathe in and out. Allow yourself to take at least 5 slow, deep breaths. As you do so, thank God for the breath of life within you.

Notice the despair and the promises in verses 11-13:

*Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely. Therefore 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. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.*

In this time when many feel panic, the words of the prophet may ring very true. How does God respond to this kind of despair?

*PRAYER: God of life and breath, thank you for my life and for the promise that no matter what happens you will breathe your spirit into me, and I will live. Remind me today that nothing can separate me from your spirit, your breath, your love for me. AMEN.*

### **Psalm 130**

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.*

*Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!*

*If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?*

*But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.*

*I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in God's word I hope;*

*my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.*

*O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with our God is great power to redeem.*

*It is God who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.*

As we walk through this pandemic, we wait for news, for answers, for the best and for the worst that can happen. How would it shift your waiting to reframe this time as a time when you are waiting for the Lord? How would it feel to be also waiting for what God is going to do next?

Does it help you to believe that there is forgiveness with God? What are some things that you might want to be forgiven for? Spend some time in prayer asking for God's forgiveness for these things.

Now—know that because God is forgiving, and Christ has come for you, these things—are in fact forgiven and over. God has forgiven you fully. You are free to move forward from the past.

Read the Psalm again—this time, using it as your prayer.

### **John 11:1-45**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So, the sisters sent a message to

Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But 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." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus 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. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be alright." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "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 said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "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?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." 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." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The 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. When 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." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where

have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So, the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus 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 four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So, they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I 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." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The 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." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

[CLICK HERE for link to a video sermon offered by Pastor Rick Nelson](#)

*PRAYER: God of life and resurrection, Thank you for life. Resurrect in me today your hope and life and breath. Fill me with the wind and breath of your Holy Spirit. Fill me with new life. Fill me with the sure and certain hope that with you I am promised life in this world and on into the next. AMEN.*

The following hymn is here for you to sing, or to simply read and ponder the lyrics.

# O God, Our Help in Ages Past

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Isaac Watts, 1719; alt.

Ps. 90:1-2, 4-5

1 O God, our help in a - ges past, our hope for years to come,  
2 Un - der the shad-ow of your throne your saints have dwelt se - cure;  
3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood or earth re - ceived its frame,  
4 A thou - sand a - ges in your sight are like an eve - ning gone,

Our shel - ter from the storm-y blast, and our e - ter - nal home:  
Suf - fi - cient is your arm a - lone, and our de - fense is sure.  
From ev - er - last - ing you are God, to end - less years the same.  
Short as the watch that ends the night be - fore the ris - ing sun.

5 Time, like an ev-er-roll-ing stream,  
soon bears us all away;  
We fly for-got-ten, as a dream  
fades at the o-pen-ing day.

6 O God, our help in a-ges past,  
our hope for years to come,  
Still be our God while trou-bles last,  
and our e-ter-nal home!

*Watts, minister of a Congregational church in London, wrote theological and philosophical works and hundreds of "hymns of human composure" (everyday language). He augmented the congregational singing of psalms with a new style of hymnody.*

Tune: ST. ANNE C.M.  
William Croft, 1708

And now,  
May the Lord bless you and keep you.  
May God's loving face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.  
May the God of life look upon you with favor and grant you peace.

