

March 29, 2020, Lent 5

Parts of this service marked with an asterisk () may be led by one person.*

Invocation

* We worship as we live, in the name of the Father,
and of the Son (†), and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Confession *(Read together)*

God who is love, we come admitting the brokenness in our lives:
the brokenness between ourselves, the brokenness between nations,
the brokenness between humanity and creation.
Give us the courage to acknowledge this truth.
Give us the faith to trust your presence.
Give us the desire to share your healing,
promised and provided in Jesus Christ (†) our Lord. Amen.

Hymn *(Read or sung together)*

(Hymn lyrics printed under OneLicence # 731166-A)

What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this, O my soul!
What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul, for my soul,
to bear the dreadful curse for my soul?

When I was sinking down, sinking down, sinking down,
When I was sinking down, sinking down,
When I was sinking down beneath God righteous frown,
Christ laid aside his crown for my soul, for my soul,
Christ laid aside his crown for my soul.

To God and to the Lamb, I will sing, I will sing,
To God and to the Lamb, I will sing,
To God and to the Lamb, who is the great I AM,
while millions join the theme, I will sing, I will sing,
while millions join the theme, I will sing.

And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on;
And when from death I'm free, I'll sing God's love for me,
and through eternity, I'll sing on, I'll sing on,
and through eternity, I'll sing on.

For those of you reading this on line, a choral version of this hymn may be heard by clicking here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsVnvN3EVxY>

Prayer of the Day (*Prayer used by permission of Augsburg Fortress*)

* God is with us. Let us pray.

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ, and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Gospel Reading

* The Holy Gospel according to John.

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 [Jewish leaders] 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 all right.' 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 [people] 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 [those] 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 [those] 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 [they] 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 for 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 upwards 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.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection

* This is an incredibly powerful story. It is full of real human interactions, real human suffering and pain, and also real human hope.

But it is important for us not to jump too quickly into the so-called "happy ending." There is much for us to gain by waiting, by lingering, by sitting in the house with Mary and Martha, by gathering outside the tomb with the crowd, by standing and weeping with Jesus.

It is crucial for us to hold onto the fact that Jesus did not rush in to "fix" this situation. The way John tells his story, this waiting, this delay, this pause is a central part of this encounter.

Yes, there is Good News at the end. Yes, there is hope for all of us.

Yet, without the waiting, without the pause, without entering deeply into the pain and abandonment, we will likely miss the whole point.

Jesus does not come to "fix" things. Rather, Jesus comes to point us to the presence of the one who is with us even in the *middle* of our broken, painful, "un-fixed" world.

This is pretty important for us right now. We are isolated. We are separated from each other. Sure, we can talk on our phones or computers, and these are important to maintain. But, as you well know, they are no substitute for face-to-face conversation; they are no replacement for chats in the living rooms of friends, or suppers with family in restaurants, or worship together in church.

We are very much like Mary and Martha right now, craving the presence of Jesus, wondering why he is delaying, wondering why he isn't coming and "fixing this."

This is a very normal feeling. It is completely understandable. I am feeling this myself. We all are.

So let us wait for Jesus together. Let us stay in this silent space for a time with each other. Let us hold to the promise that he is indeed coming, even while we admit that it is, at times, hard to be patient. Let us remain with Mary and Martha, and see what the Lord will bring. Amen.

Prayers

* Acknowledging our broken world, we come to God in prayer, asking for faith and healing.

[Short pause]

God of love, we are broken; we are isolated; we are sick and we are dying; and, like Martha, we wonder why you do not come. Thank you for listening to our complaint. In your unbounded mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of love, we are mourning; we are crying; we are in pain, and, like Mary, we wonder why you have not stepped in. Thank you for crying with us. In your unbounded mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of love, our world is in turmoil; our lives have been turned upside down; we hear conflicting messages, and like Mary and Martha, we wonder why you seem so distant. Thank you for your promise which walks through our confusion with us. In your unbounded mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of love, your church is cut off; we are unable to gather, and like the crowds, we feel powerless in the face of this overwhelming reality. Thank you for letting us hear your prayer. In your unbounded mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of love, we are conscious of so much need; we are surrounded by discouragement; we are overwhelmed with the desperation of so many people, so many causes, so much pain, and like Mary, Martha **and** the crowds, we only seem capable of hearing our own anxiety. Thank you for your silent compassion which provides us a safe place to be. In your unbounded mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of love, we are aware of those who are sick, those who care for them, those whose work is suddenly dangerous, those who cannot work, those who are attempting keep us safe, and those whom we name before you.

[Names of those who are of special concern may be offered.]

We thank you for your promise that nothing will separate us from your love. In your unbounded mercy,

Hear our prayer.

God of love, we crave your presence; we crave your healing; we crave your life, and like Lazarus, we wait for your call. Thank you for coming. In your unbounded mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Trusting the promise of mercy, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who taught us to pray,
Our Father....

Lord's Prayer (*Prayer used by permission of Augsburg Fortress*)

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

OR

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, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are your, now and forever. Amen.

OR

To pray with the leaders of our local congregations and parishes, you may click here -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D7r99aSnzg>

Benediction (*Read together*)

May almighty God,
The Father who created us to live in love,
The Son (†) who died and rose to bring us new life,
And the Spirit who gently guides us in all our hard places,
bless us all, now and forever. Amen.