



## LITURGY 23A LENT 4A

If only

### Abstract

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

2Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications!

Psalm 130:1-2 (NRSV)

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## Readings

### OLD TESTAMENT

*Ezekiel 37:1–14*

**37** 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. <sup>2</sup> He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> 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.”

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.” <sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

<sup>11</sup> 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.’ <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> 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.

### Psalm 130

A Song of Ascents.

<sup>1</sup> Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

<sup>2</sup> Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications!

<sup>3</sup> If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?

<sup>4</sup> But there is forgiveness with you,  
so that you may be revered.

<sup>5</sup> I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;

<sup>6</sup> my soul waits for the Lord  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.

<sup>7</sup> O Israel, hope in the LORD!

For with the LORD there is steadfast love,  
and with him is great power to redeem.

<sup>8</sup>It is he who will redeem Israel  
from all its iniquities.

## NEW TESTAMENT

*Romans 8:6–11*

<sup>6</sup>To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

<sup>7</sup>For 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, <sup>8</sup>and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If 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.

## GOSPEL

*John 11:1–45*

**11** Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup>Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. <sup>3</sup>So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." <sup>4</sup>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." <sup>5</sup>Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, <sup>6</sup>after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

<sup>7</sup>Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup>The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?"

<sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." <sup>11</sup>After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." <sup>12</sup>The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." <sup>13</sup>Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. <sup>14</sup>Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup>For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup>Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup>When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, <sup>19</sup>and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. <sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. <sup>21</sup>Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup>Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, <sup>26</sup>and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup>She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

<sup>28</sup> 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." <sup>29</sup> And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> 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." <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. <sup>34</sup> He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." <sup>35</sup> Jesus began to weep. <sup>36</sup> So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

<sup>38</sup> Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. <sup>39</sup> 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." <sup>40</sup> Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. <sup>42</sup> 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." <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> 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."

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. <sup>1</sup>  
resurrection

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<sup>1</sup> [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

## Liturgy 23A Lent 4A

### If only

#### John 11.1-45

Jesus raises his dear friend Lazarus to life and restores the faith of Lazarus' sisters Martha and Mary. But in Bethany, only two miles from Jerusalem, Jesus' own life is increasingly at risk from the authorities there.

**This week's resources explore the question:** how is Jesus present when things go wrong?

**Sunday, March 29, 2020 | Lent | Fifth Sunday in Lent | Year A**

<i>Old Testament</i>	Ezekiel 37:1–14
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 130
<i>New Testament</i>	Romans 8:6–11
<i>Gospel</i>	John 11:1–45 <sup>2</sup>

	<b>Pre-Service</b>
	<p><b>Introit</b></p> <p>TIS #744/P&amp;W #632 – “Refresh my heart”      Bullock          Maranatha! Praise Band</p>
	<p><b>Greeting</b></p> <p>May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ          The Love of God          and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit          be with us all</p> <p><b>and also with us</b></p>
	<p><b>We Gather</b></p> <p>Come and worship the resurrection God,          the Lord of all creation,          who is always present, no matter what.          Worship him today in spirit and in truth.</p> <p>These are extraordinary times                    as we meet in our own homes, on our own devices          trying to care for ourselves and those around us</p>

<sup>2</sup> [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

	<p>as God cares for us yesterday, today and for eternity.</p> <p>As we meet, we acknowledge the first nation peoples and others of this land. For this Land - We give thanks! For the First Peoples - We give thanks!</p> <p>We honour the custodians of sacred stories, of dreamings and the connections with the deep earth and oceans and those caring for our communities. May we work together for the restoration of the Land and Sea and Her Peoples.<sup>3</sup></p> <p><i>Let us pray</i> God of new life, God of risen hope, as we gather, May we know your resurrection power in our lives. May our spirits be renewed. May our bodies be restored. Amen.</p>
	<p><b>Hymn/song</b> TIS #653 – “This is a day of new beginnings” TIS #122 – “What shall I do my God to love” TIS #407 – “Breathe on me, breath of God “</p>
	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>Hi, Some of you will recognise this document as the one I preach off, others will not. If it is helpful, share, plagiarise and reuse at will for your own purposes.</p> <p>It is my prayerful hope that you are safe, well and can find a measure of peace in turbulent times in our faith.</p> <p>In extraordinary times, we need to consider new gifts and new ways of expressing them and re-look at using others in different ways. I pray that you consider this as appropriate and helpful.</p> <p><i>Let us pray</i> Living Lord Jesus, let us draw near to worship you. Let the same spirit that brought Lazarus out of the grave, and raised you to new life, dwell in us today and all our days.</p>

<sup>3</sup> Graham Vawser, Amelia Koh-Butler, © Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia August 2016 (adapted)

	<b>Amen.</b>
	<p><b>Readings</b> The readings have been placed together at the <a href="#">front of this document</a>. I stress the Ezekiel and John reading.</p> <p><i>respond</i> For the word of the Lord <b>Thanks be to God</b></p>
	<p><b>Hymn/song/video</b> I Believe In Jesus Artist: Vineyard Worship Album: 25 Top Vineyard Worship Songs (Change My Heart Oh God)</p>
	<p><b>We say Sorry</b></p> <p><i>Let us Pray</i> Lord, forgive us when we don't always trust you, when we don't always trust that you know best.</p> <p>Forgive us when we think our timing is better than yours, when we think that we know best.</p> <p>Forgive us when we demand things from you, when we want everything now, and stamp our feet when we don't get it.</p> <p>Forgive us when we turn away from you, when we don't understand why things have gone wrong, when we feel let down and hurt, thinking that you have rejected us and abandoned us.</p> <p>For you never reject or abandon us. Forgive us, Lord, and give us renewed hope.</p> <p><b>Amen.</b></p>
	<p><b>Words of Assurance</b> All friends of our God, the children of the living God, be assured, you are known by name, you are remembered, you are forgiven, you are loved.</p> <p>Your sins are forgiven</p>

	<b>Thanks be to God.</b> <sup>4</sup>
	<b>Hymn/Song</b> "Amazing Love" by Graham Kendrick. As recorded on "The Very Best of Graham Kendrick".
	<b>Response</b>  <i>See the end of the document</i>
	<b>Hymn/song</b> TIS #653 – "This is a day of new beginnings"
	<b>Notices</b>
	<p><b>Prayers for all people</b></p> <p><i>Think of teardrop on the face of a loved one. Think of a person or a place that weeps with sadness and needs fresh hope and God's resurrection power. Be still and quiet, holding your teardrops before God.</i></p> <p><i>Let us say together:</i></p> <p>Thank you, Lord, that you weep with us as you wept with Mary and Martha. Comfort us as we comfort others. Bring restored hope to those we hold up before you today.</p> <p>God of hope, heal us and restore us,</p> <p>May we all know your resurrection power. <i>Rest in God's arms for a moment with your thoughts</i></p> <p>We pray for all who weep today: for those who grieve and mourn for the loss of loved ones – husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, friends... for those that live in fear of the world we are living in.</p> <p><b>Lord, weep with us and bring fresh hope.</b></p> <p>We pray for those who care for people at the end of their earthly lives: chaplains, hospice workers, nurses, doctors, carers, pastors, lifestyle staff, undertakers... Give them strength, courage, empathy and love as they walk with those who weep.</p> <p><b>Lord, weep with us and bring fresh hope.</b></p>

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<sup>4</sup> Words for worship © MediaCom 2020 (Adapted)





	Thank you

## Response to the Word

### [Video Dem Bones VIDEO](#)

I thought about asking you to come up here and dance  
maybe while I sang,  
but then I remembered we are in isolation.  
Anyway, we're Uniting, we don't dance in church 😊

Three friends were discussing death  
and one of them asked:  
"What would you like people to say about you at your funeral?"

The first friends said:  
"I would like them to say, I was a great humanitarian,  
someone who cared about his community."

The second said:  
"He was a great husband and father,  
who was an example for many to follow."

The third said, I would like them to say, "Look, he's moving!!"

There are some things even in worship  
that make your heart want to dance.  
That's the feeling we ought to have when we read the stories from Ezekiel and John.

In the Ezekiel reading  
The nation of Israel,  
the holy city of Jerusalem  
and the magnificent Temple all lay in ruins.

It was a tragic scene.  
But the prophet Ezekiel had a vision.  
In his vision he sat in the middle of a valley where there was nothing but old dried-up skeletons.  
Bones were everywhere.  
It was a scene of total desolation and despair.  
A valley of dry bones.

Have you ever been in the valley of dry bones?  
Some of you have. Some of you may even be there now.  
I know I have been there, if only briefly.  
I suspect there are a lot of people who are going through it right now.  
Dry bones.

Some of you will be aware of workers around here that are doing it really tough  
and they're surrounded by dry bones.  
Their employer has closed down  
it certainly doesn't match up to their dreams.  
Dry bones.

Or it happens when you ponder your health  
when bad news comes knocking on your door  
or your relationship with your kids.  
maybe just a few years ago, life seemed so promising.  
But one by one your dreams have died.  
Now you sit there surrounded by those bones.  
And you do not know what to do.

For many of us, it happens as we age.  
The pundits are right  
aging is not for sissies.  
Dry bones.

Doctors are so busy nowadays.  
Often the waiting room is like an assembly line.  
A fellow rocks up and is asked at reception what he had.  
"Shingles" he answers  
Then the nurse, the nurses aid, the assistant all ask the same. "what do you have"  
he answers "Shingles"

Finally an hour later, a blood test, a blood pressure and temperature reading later  
the doctor walks in and asks what he had.  
"Shingles" he answers  
"Oh we better have a look, where do you have it? the doctor asks.  
"Well, you better come out to the car park then," the fellow says,  
"they're on the back of my truck."  
Dry bones.

Ezekiel looked around at all those dry bones  
and he understood that those bones represented his people,  
the people of Israel,  
scattered and without hope.

He knew that only a miracle could bring together his people again  
and restore them with vitality and purpose.  
Only a miracle would make his people live again.

You think your life is hopeless,  
that your future health is hopeless,  
that your future is hopeless?  
and you despair wondering if anything good could ever happen to you again?

Well, hear the word of the Lord.  
Dem bones, dem bones,  
dem dry bones, dem bones gonna rise again.

God is still doing miracles in people's lives every day.  
There would be reason for us to despair if we were simply discussing ancient history.  
But Christ is touching our lives every day.

God does wondrous things in the lives of people who will trust Him

and give themselves to Him.

Ezekiel heard the voice of the Lord asking him,

“Son of man, can these bones live?”

Ezekiel answered,

“Sovereign Lord, you alone know.”

Maybe we’re all asking that question about our lives

or the life of someone we love.

Maybe you’re asking that question for the bloke up the street that’s suffering depression.

Well, hear the word of the Lord.

Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones,

dem bones gonna rise again.

Amen

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