

Welcome to Lord of Life as we worship online!

The Lord be with you. Dear siblings in Christ, welcome to worship!

Today is a 5th Sunday – though this isn't quite the twist I was expecting when I typically change up worship. Yet we believe in the God who meets us where we are and trust when we gather in God's name in whatever format, God is present with us.

If you'd like to follow along with today's worship, go to lordoflifeak.com click on the PDF document on our website and you'll find the full text of today's worship.

It is our practice to begin worship with a moment of quiet. This gives us a chance to quiet our minds and hearts, to let go of the noise and to-do items around us, so we can be fully present in worship and join as a community in one spirit. I invite you to take a few deep breaths and to rest as we join our hearts together in worship. (1 minute of silence)

Confession and Absolution:

We gather in the name of the + one God who is present, who gives life, who calls into existence the things that do not exist, amen.

If God kept count of sins, none of us could stand. But with God is forgiveness, and so we confess our failings, our frailties, and our brokenness so God can lift us up again. (I invite you to silently offer those things to God.)

Gracious God, have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned away from you, knowingly and unknowingly. We have wandered from your resurrection life. We have strayed from your love for all people. Turn us back to you, O God. Give us new hearts and right spirits, that we may find what is pleasing to you and dwell in your house forever, amen.

Receive good news: God turns to you in love and works to restore us to life. Which is why I say with confidence: all your sin is forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the free and abounding gift of God's grace for you. Amen.

Forgiven and beloved of God, rest in the peace of restored relationship and the Peace of God be with you always **(and also with you.)**

Take a moment to be centered in the prayer of the day:

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 Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, amen.

We typically read four Scriptures each Sunday, and I invite you to write them down so you can read and reflect on them on your own.

Our readings this week are found in Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11, and the Gospel reading is John 11:1-45. I'll be reading Psalm 130 and John today.

I'll be reading Psalm 130 and telling the story of Lazarus from John 11.

Psalm 130

¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

²Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

³If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

⁴But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

⁵I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

⁶my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

⁷O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem.

⁸It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

John 11:1-45

Now 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. ⁷Then 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.”

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb 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.” ²⁸When 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?” ³⁸Then 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 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 upward 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.” ⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

Sermon

Both sisters greet Jesus with the same statement – and they don't hold anything back. "If you had been here, our brother would not have died." They had even given him advance notice so he could get on the problem of Lazarus' illness. But Jesus had waited. I don't know if they're blaming Jesus for Lazarus' death – really, people get sick and die all the time; I think they're more upset about Jesus' *inaction*.

They trust the kind of power Jesus has – they believe he is God-with-them. They trust their relationship with Jesus – sending word "Lord, he whom you *love* is ill." Their question is WHY didn't Jesus DO SOMETHING?!

And isn't that the question we have at every turn in our lives. If God loves humanity so much, why hasn't Covid 19 been miraculously snuffed out? If God cares about us so deeply, why does cancer exist? If God is the great provider, why are there so many people who are homeless? If people believe in God, why do they struggle with depression and anxiety and failed marriages and ...?

Do you feel Psalm 130? "out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Hear my voice."

I think the most faithful thing to say at this point is: I don't know why these bad things happen to us. It's certainly not because we deserve it. And those who skirt troubles aren't better than anyone else. And if anyone does tell you why these things are happening – that God is visiting some old-testament-era-plague upon us all – don't believe them.

Because this is what I know of God: God never takes the easy way out. The easy way out would have been speaking a word of healing from 30 miles away like he did for Jairus' daughter. But here, Jesus faces the grief, weeps for the pain, and does the hard work of reversing destruction.

The easy route would have kept Lazarus from dying. The easy route would have skirted the arresting party in the Garden of Gethsemane. The easy route would have stumped Pilate through the night. The easy route would have floated down from the cross and walked to the palace to take over. God doesn't take the easy route. God does the hard work of reversing destruction.

Roll the stone away. Face the stink. "Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" "Father, I thank you for having heard me." ... "Lazarus! Come out!"

And this is the hope I have for what God can do after Covid 19 – or as cancer is being fought, or as depression is talked about and medicated, or as divorce is negotiated, or as our self-worth is shattered – that God continues the work of reversing the destruction around us.

Online Worship for March 29, 2020

I hope we will rediscover as a society what it feels like to be dependent on one another and looking out for one another. I hope we will be more aware of how our actions and choices and votes and wastefulness effect not only those around us, but those who are vulnerable and pushed aside. I hope we will approach others and life itself with gratitude. I hope that we would take our faith seriously and invite others into the hope we have that disease and natural disaster and failure cannot touch. I hope we will be part of God's work to reverse the destruction.

"Unbind us, O God, and let us go." Amen.

Prayer of God's People

Gathered in spirit and turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray as one for the church, the world, and all those in need.

God of life, bind your faithful people into one body. Enliven the church with your Spirit and bless the efforts of those who work to renew it. Accomplish your work of salvation in us and through us, for the sake of the world. Hear us O God, **your mercy is great.**

God of life, you love the world you have made and you grieve when creation suffers. Heal areas of the world ravaged by earthquakes, storms, wildfires, and drought. Bring all living things to new life. Hear us O God, **your mercy is great.**

God of life, show redemption to all who watch and wait with eager expectation: those longing for wars to cease, those waiting for immigration paperwork to finalize, those seeking election, and those in dire need of humanitarian relief. Come quickly with your hope. Hear us O God, **your mercy is great.**

God of life, you weep with those who grieve. We lift in prayer the families of the 30,000 who have died from Covid-19. Unbind all who are held captive by anxiety, despair, depression, or pain. Fill us with compassion and empathy for those who struggle, and keep us faithful in prayer. Hear us O God, **your mercy is great.**

God of life, you are our resurrection. We remember all those who have died and trust that, in you, they live again. Breathe new life into our dry bones, that we may be secure from despair, find hope in your promises, and help us have faith in this chaos. Guide us through the wilderness of Lent, and prepare us to rejoice in your resurrection life.

Lord's Prayer We pray together the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us to pray,

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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever, amen.

As we come to the end of worship, filled with the things of God, we turn to the world in our Offering.

Our world has turned to scarcity: not enough toilet paper, not enough rice, not enough savings, not enough patience. We are called to live in a different way than that mindset, trusting that God provides for our needs, and through us, God provides for the needs of others.

So please, continue to support your church and community with your financial gifts to ensure our ministries have a future.

You may mail your offering to our locked mailbox at 1005 St. Nicholas Drive, North Pole, AK 99705. You may give securely on our website, lordoflifeak.com by clicking the "Giving" tab and "I'd like to give" button. You may give securely from your phone using the "Give Plus Church" app, just search by our zip code of 99705 and choose Lord of Life, and follow the easy instructions.

Let us pray, Holy and generous host, you set a table where we feast as friends. Prepare us to witness to your goodness with every gift you have given us to share, that all people may know your peace through Jesus Christ, now and forever, amen.

Thank you for your generosity, especially as we are absent from each other.

Announcements

First, thank you to the crews that came on Tuesday and Wednesday to distribute food boxes. Until the Food Bank tell us otherwise, we are still distributing on both days this week too. Please watch our Facebook or our website for updates.

Our April newsletter can be found on our website under "get the latest" and gives you an idea of what to expect as we prepare for Easter.

This Wednesday, if the Psalms are a mystery for you, I invite you to participate in our Zoom worship. We'll spend some time on how to read the Psalms and how they can be woven into your own prayer life. On Wednesday at 7pm, go to zoom.com and type in our meeting code: 427-515-086. I'll be emailing that information out as well.

With all that is going on around us, it's hard to face what's going on within us. If you need an ear and a prayer, do not hesitate to call or text me: 322-2065.

Blessing

As you face the troubles of the day, may you know that each moment is the acceptable time to turn to God. Each day holds glimmers of your salvation. The

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Holy God, speaking, spoken, and inspiring, + bless you, unbind you, and send you in love and in peace.

Go in peace and share the good news. Thanks be to God!
Make it a great week!