

**Fifth Sunday In Lent:
Scripture Lessons**

Psalms 130:1-8 (NIV) ¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; ²O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. ³If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? ⁴But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. ⁵I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope. ⁶My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning. ⁷O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. ⁸He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (NIV) ¹The hand of the LORD was upon 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. ²He 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. ³He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know." ⁴Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶I 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.'" ⁷So 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. ⁸I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. ⁹Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet--a vast

army. ¹¹Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' ¹²Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: O 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. ¹³Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴I 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.'"

Romans 8:1-11 (NIV) ¹Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ²because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, ⁴in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit. ⁵Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. ⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. ¹¹And 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 through his Spirit, who lives in you.

John 11:1-45 (NIV) ¹Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair. ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." ⁴When 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." ⁵Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. ⁷Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." ⁸"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?" ⁹Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. ¹⁰It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light." ¹¹After 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." ¹²His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep. ¹⁴So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶Then Thomas (called Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." ¹⁷On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁹and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰When 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. ²²But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." ²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." ²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live,

even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷"Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." ²⁸And 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." ²⁹When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When 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. ³²When 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." ³³When 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. ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶Then 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?" ³⁸Jesus, 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." ⁴⁰Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I 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." ⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The 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." ⁴⁵Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

Fifth Sunday In Lent

Never Die!

John 11:1-45

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in these uncertain times, reveal to us the truth that gives true hope and comfort. Be our instructor this morning, through your Holy Spirit, so we can believe and trust Your truth. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

There is a question no one can avoid:

In the Bible it is the wise and righteous Job who asks it: *If a man dies, will he live again?* Job 14:14 (NIV)

It is a question we cannot help but **personalize**:

“If **I** die, will **I** live again?”

“If **you** die, will **you** live again?”

We cannot escape death. It hits us with a force of inevitability and finality. As a nation, indeed as a global community, we are right now walking through the valley of the shadow of death.

Throughout history, the question has been asked, what happens to us when we die? For some, it's a great mystery. People of all over the world have different ideas about what happens after death. Some believe you just become part of the soil or the food chain and continue a “circle of life” that has no purpose. Some believe you die many times and come back as some other form of life depending on what you did in this one.

The Bible says those answers are false. So, what does happen at our death?

In our gospel lesson today, Jesus gives the answer to this burning question.

John 11:25-26 [NIV] Jesus said to [his dear friend Martha], *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and*

whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Then He asks Martha, Do you believe this?”

Each of us must answer that for ourselves. *Do you believe this?*

It's vital to know and believe what Jesus said about himself and about death. What will happen to you for eternity depends on it.

This morning we will take a closer look at this astonishing claim of Jesus and three truths that give us comfort and hope in death.

First, when Jesus said **“I am the resurrection . . .”** He was saying that

□ **Eternity begins today**

(John 3:16-18; 5:42; 6:40; 11:20-25; 17:3)

The backstory here, is that Jesus' good friend, Lazarus, was ill and close to death. Jesus and his disciples were a long day's journey away. And when He received word of his friend's critical condition, Jesus purposefully and pointedly stayed where he was for two more days. It was not out of indifference or lack of concern that Jesus didn't rush to get to the bedside of Lazarus. In verse 5 we are told: *Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.*

When Jesus finally arrived in Bethany, the village was halfway through the traditional 7-day period of mourning and grief. We are told that many people had come from Jerusalem to comfort Martha and her sister Mary at the loss of their dear brother. We take up the account in verse

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. ²²But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”*

²³*Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”*

²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

When Jesus told Martha that her *brother will rise again*, (verse 23) Martha responded that, indeed she believed her brother would rise again in the resurrection **at the last day**. (verse 24)

Perhaps Martha had heard what Jesus himself had said, which is recorded for us in **John 6:40**. "*For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*" (NIV)

In fact, most Jewish people in the time of Jesus believed that there would come a day when all the dead will be **judged**. Those who lived righteous lives, who believed in the promises God made to His people and obeyed His commands, would **rise**, that is, be resurrected in bodily form from the dead.

Those who rejected God and did not obey His commandments would also **rise**—but be condemned to hell.

Martha believed in a **future event**, a **future** resurrection, a **future** heaven. But Jesus was not talking about an event in the distant future.

Jesus was talking about something that would happen **today!**

Jesus said, "**I am the resurrection . . .**"

Many people put off thinking about a judgement day or a life to come, thinking that it's in the distant future for them.

When Jesus said, *I am the resurrection*, He was saying that the resurrection and the day of judgement was not just an event in the distant future, it had already come!

Whether we are raised to eternal life or whether we are judged and condemned depends on whether or not we believe and receive Jesus.

The future has already been fulfilled in Jesus. In Jesus, the Eternal One, and indeed eternity itself has broken into this world filled with decay and death.

The Bible says in **John 3:16-18 (NASB)** "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not **perish**, but have eternal life. ¹ For God did not send the Son into the world to **judge** the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been **judged already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

The resurrection and the judgment day have already come in the person of Jesus.

Jesus said in **John 5:24 (NIV)** "*I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me **has** [present tense] eternal life and **will not be condemned**; he **has** crossed over from death to life.*

Jesus prayed to the Father in **John 17:3 (NIV)** *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

Eternal life begins with knowing Jesus Christ. Eternity begins today when we believe and receive Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The second truth of Jesus' incredible claim is that

- ❑ **The Life Jesus gives cannot die** (John 11:25-26; 14:19; Acts 2:24; 3:15; Revelation 1:18; Philippians 3:21)

John 11:25-26 [NIV] *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

Yes, this mortal body will cease to function one day, and it will die and begin to decay, just as Jesus' earthly body died when it succumbed to the torture of the cross—but that's not the end of the story.

Acts 2:24 (NIV) [Peter said] *God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was **impossible** for death to keep its hold on him.*

Revelation 1:18 (NIV) *I am the Living One; I **was** dead, and behold I **am** alive for evermore!*

Acts 3:15 (NIV)

[Peter said] *You killed **the author of life**, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.*

Jesus plainly told his disciples in John 14:19, "Because I live, you too shall live".

What Jesus was saying was, what happened to Him will happen to us, if we also believe and follow Him.

Philippians 3:21 (NIV) [the Lord Jesus Christ] who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Jesus is the Life that Cannot Die

Jesus said, *He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"*

The third truth implicit in Jesus' claim was that

❑ **The Life that Jesus gives has no end**

(John 5:21; 1 John 5:11-12; Romans 6:4-5; I Corinthians 15:51)

Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the **life**." To believe and receive Jesus, is to receive the life that has no end.

In John 5:21 Jesus said, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them **life**, even so the Son also gives **life** to whom He wishes." (NASB-U)

In him is life **1 John 5:11-12:** *And this is the testimony: God **has** given us **eternal** life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has **life**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have **life**.*

Romans 6:4-5 (NIV) ⁴*We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.* ⁵*If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*

Romans 8:11 *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

1 Cor 15:51 ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

The great evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, famously said of his own death: "One day you will read that Dwight L. Moody is dead. Don't you believe it! I'll never be more alive."

In our gospel lesson, Jesus backed up his extraordinary claim by raising Lazarus from the dead, in full view of all who were mourning his death.

What is more significant for us was that Jesus died as the atoning sacrifice for our sin—so that we can be eternally forgiven—and then rose from the dead, demonstrating that his promise is valid for all who trust in Him.

Jesus **is** the life that cannot die, He **is** the life that will never end. For those who are *in* Jesus Christ—for those who believe and receive him—eternity begins today.

Let us pray . . .