



THE LIVING  
WORD  
OF  
LENT

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

March 19 - March 25



# FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Dear friends, this world is in the deep end of suffering: wars, rumors of wars, famine, political corruption, economic instability, cancer, addiction, mental illness, broken homes, school shootings, violence, abuse, moral confusion. Many feel what the people in the vision of Ezekiel 37 felt when they said, “Our hope is gone.”

In a world that is in the depths, we do not need to offer happy lies, trivial positivity, or temporary fixes. As one singer says, “Band-Aids don’t fix bullet holes.” Where there is suffering it can be tempting to rush in with platitudes and well-wishes, but ***our neighbors, family members, and we ourselves need the joyful truth, profound hope, and eternal restoration that God has made available through the resurrection life of his Son.***

The Scriptures for the week leading up to and away from the fifth Sunday of Lent follow the golden thread of the hope of resurrection. In the Old Testament readings leading up to Sunday, we enter the prophet Ezekiel’s experience of the despair of an exiled people. In Sunday’s reading of Ezekiel 37, this state of exile is pictured as a valley of dry bones, a place that appears far beyond repair. But God gave Ezekiel an image of resurrection as a promise of returning his people from exile to their land and to intimacy with him.

That promise of resurrection lingered in the hopes of God’s people even into Jesus’ day. Some, like the Sadducees mentioned in Matthew 22, denied the resurrection, while others like Martha in John 11:24 hoped in “the resurrection at the last day.” And the thrill of hope arrived in the person of Jesus Christ. He said to Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (Jn 11:25-26).

The longing for and promise of resurrection finds ultimate fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. He not only raised Lazarus from the dead in John 11, but he himself was raised from the dead and promises resurrection life to anybody



who believes in him. ***This means that the last word on human history is not death but life, not destruction but resurrection.*** And the Apostle Paul confidently proclaimed that those who believe in Jesus have the same Spirit in them that raised him from the dead (Rom 8:11). That means that believers have resurrection life today and forever, that we face the depths with the knowledge that we live in the heights.

As you read this week, I encourage you to inhabit the stories from two perspectives: First, from the perspective of those in the depths and looking for resurrection; second, from the perspective of God who joins us in the depths in order to bring resurrection. Take time to go to the depths of your own suffering and the pain of our world. Cry out from the depths of your soul like the psalmist in Psalm 130. Linger with God there in the graveyard like Ezekiel, Mary, Martha, and Jesus did. Allow the Holy Spirit to reveal his hope to you and for you. Then you will be able to join the psalmist and call out to the world to “put your hope in the Lord; for with the Lord is unfailing love and full redemption.”



## FOR reflection

***Where do you find hope when you feel hopeless? Pray for God to give you the hope of his resurrected Son.***



# SCRIPTURE

## READINGS FOR THE WEEK

<b>Thursday</b>	Psalm 130; Ezekiel 1:1-3, 2:8-3:3; Revelation 10:1-11
<b>Friday</b>	Psalm 130; Ezekiel 33:10-16; Revelation 11:15-19
<b>Saturday</b>	Psalm 130; Ezekiel 36:8-15; Luke 24:44-53
<b>Sunday</b>	Psalm 45 or Psalm 40:5-10; Isaiah 7:10-14; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38
<b>Monday</b>	Psalm 143; 1 Kings 17:17-24; Acts 20:7-12
<b>Tuesday</b>	Psalm 143; 2 Kings 4:18-37; Ephesians 2:1-10
<b>Wednesday</b>	Psalm 143; Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41; Matthew 22:23-33

### ***Why do the daily readings begin on Thursday?***

The daily readings for each week begin on Thursday and end on the following Wednesday. The Thursday through Saturday readings prepare the reader for the Sunday ahead. The Monday through Wednesday readings reflect on what was presented on Sunday.

# The Morning Liturgy

## **Opening Scripture**

Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

*Joel 2:13 (NIV)*

## **Opening Prayer** *(based on Psalm 51)*

Open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Give me the joy of your saving help again and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. *Amen.*

## **Scripture Reading** *(read Psalm and Gospel text here)*

## **Period of Silence**

## **Confessing Our Faith** *(Apostles' Creed)*

## **The Lord's Prayer**

## **The Collect** *(Fifth Sunday in Lent)*

*Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*

*Amen.*

## *A Midday Prayer*

Blessed Savior, at this hour you hung upon the cross, stretching out your loving arms. Grant that all the peoples of the earth may look to you and be saved; for your mercies' sake. *Amen.*

## *An Early Evening Prayer*

Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; be our companion in the way, kindle our hearts, and awaken hope, that we may know you as you are revealed in Scripture and the breaking of bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. *Amen.*

## *A Bedtime Confession and Prayer*

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. *Amen.*



*Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let your blessing be upon us always; through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*



