Psalm

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.. Amen.

Psalm 116:1–4, 8; antiphon: v. 15

Precious in the sight | of the LORD*
  is the death | of his saints.
I love the LORD, because * he has heard* my voice and my pleas for | mercy.
Because he inclined his | ear to me,* therefore I will call on him as long | as I live.
The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid | hold on me;*
  I suffered distress and | anguish.
Then I called on the name | of the LORD:*
  “O LORD, I pray, deliver- | er my soul!”

Collect of the Day

Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Old Testament Reading

Ezekiel 37:1–14

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. 2And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. 3And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” 4Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6And I will lay sinews upon 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.”

7So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had 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 the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” 10So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.’” Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel.

And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people.

And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

Psalm

Psalm 130; antiphon: v. 7

1Out | of the depths* I cry to you, | O LORD!
O Lord, hear my voice!*  
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!  

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,* O Lord, who could stand?  
But with you there is forgiveness,* that you may be feared.  
I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,* and in his word I hope;  

Romans 8:1–11  

Epistle  
There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. 10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 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.

Holy Gospel  
Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” 4 But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. 7 Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” 8 The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” 9 Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. 10 But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” 11 After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” 12 The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, 15 and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16 So Thomas, called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” 17 Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18 Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, 19 and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. 20 So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. 21 Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” 23 Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24 Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” 25 Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” 27 She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.” 28 When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” 29 And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. 32 Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Jesus wept. 36 So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” 37 But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?” 38 Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 39 Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” 40 Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” 41 So
they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” 43 When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” 44 The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him.

Apostles’ Creed

430 My Song Is Love Unknown (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbmsJYoJSqI)

1 My song is love unknown,  
   My Savior’s love to me,  
   Love to the loveless shown  
   That they might lovely be.  
   Oh, who am I  
   That for my sake  
   My Lord should take  
   Frail flesh and die?

2 He came from His blest throne  
   Salvation to bestow;  
   But men made strange, and none  
   The longed-for Christ would know.  
   But, oh, my friend,  
   My friend indeed,  
   Who at my need  
   His life did spend!

3 Sometimes they strew His way  
   And His sweet praises sing;  
   Resounding all the day  
   Hosannas to their King.  
   Then “Crucify!”  
   Is all their breath,  
   And for His death  
   They thirst and cry.

4 Why, what hath my Lord done?  
   What makes this rage and spite?  
   He made the lame to run,  
   He gave the blind their sight.

5 They rise and needs will have  
   My dear Lord made away;  
   A murderer they save,  
   The Prince of Life they slay.  
   Yet cheerful He  
   To suff’ring goes  
   That He His foes  
   From thence might free.

6 In life no house, no home  
   My Lord on earth might have;  
   In death no friendly tomb  
   But what a stranger gave.  
   What may I say?  
   Heav’n was His home  
   But mine the tomb  
   Wherein He lay.

7 Here might I stay and sing,  
   No story so divine!  
   Never was love, dear King,  
   Never was grief like Thine.  
   This is my friend,  
   In whose sweet praise  
   I all my days  
   Could gladly spend!

Sermon - p. 5
Prayer of the Church - p. 4
Lord’s Prayer

486 If Christ Had Not Been Raised from Death (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3DcM-GhUIY)

1 If Christ had not been raised from death  
   Our faith would be in vain,  
   Our preaching but a waste of breath,  
   Our sin and guilt remain.  
   But now the Lord is ris’n indeed;  
   He rules in earth and heav’n:  
   His Gospel meets a world of need—  
   In Christ we are forgiv’n.

2 If Christ still lay within the tomb  
   Then death would be the end,  
   And we should face our final doom  
   With neither guide nor friend.  
   But now the Savior is raised up,

3 If Christ had not been truly raised  
   His Church would live a lie;  
   His name should nevermore be praised,  
   His words deserve to die.  
   But now our great Redeemer lives;  
   Through Him we are restored;  
   His Word endures, His Church revives  
   In Christ, our risen Lord.
Acknowledgments

Prayer of the Church

We come, O Lord, with the dry bones of our broken hopes and disappointed dreams. Bind us up in Christ, that we may learn to pray with confidence, trusting in Your mercy to supply us with all things needful to us and to our salvation.

Brief silence

Almighty God, everlasting Father, You saw Israel in their despair and raised them up to hope by placing Your Spirit upon them. Join us together with the communion of saints in Christ, even though we must for a time stand apart. Raise us up from our weariness and grant us Your Spirit, that we may be strong in faith, bold in witness, holy in life and steadfast in hope. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

O eternal Lord, Your Son has given us the new birth of water and the Word and planted faith in us, that we might be Your own children. Bless Your Church. Supply her with able, fearless and caring pastors to nurture us in Your Word. Raise up faithful fathers and those who will teach and pray in Your name in every Christian household. Keep Your Church in Your mercy, that she may believe without fear and love without limit even now. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

O God of power and might, You hold in Your hand all the might of man. Give to us good government and faithful leaders who will heed Your Word and pursue righteousness and justice. Bless and defend us against all destruction, especially from this deadly pandemic, and teach us to be patient and faithful citizens of this land, using ourselves and our resources wisely for the good of all. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

O merciful Lord, Your Son shed tears for Lazarus, whom He loved. Grant Your compassion, patience and endurance to all who suffer illness, who are troubled in mind or whose time on earth is short. Spare us from death now, but give us courage and comfort far stronger by Your power over death. Eternal God, You carry the grief of those who mourn and remember all who die in Christ. Give comfort to the grieving especially the family and friends of Edna and peace to the dying, and give that same comfort and peace to us who live in the shadow and fear of death, that we would neither live nor grieve as people without hope but trust in You at every hour. Hear all our prayers, especially on behalf of Vicki, Linda, Darci, Molly, Tiffany, Marilyn, Samantha, and Tammy and for all those we name in our hearts. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

O gracious God, You daily and richly grant us all things we need for this body and life. Bless our labors, and grant us wisdom to use the fruits of those labors wisely and well, for the care of our families, for the poor in their needs, and for the support of Your work in this congregation. Preserve us from fear and greed as we live and work alone, and turn us instead in love toward our neighbors however distant. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

O blessed Lord, Your Word continues to go forth and bear good fruit. Bless the missionaries planting churches near and far, bless those churches with whom we partner in the worldwide work of the Gospel, and bless the congregations now struggling to fulfill Your bidding and do what You have called them to do in Your name. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

O Lord, God Almighty, through Your Son You have kept the promise of the ages and rescued us from sin. You have raised up the dry bones of a people captive to death and made us alive in Christ forever. Sustain us in this hope, that we may endure the tests, trials and troubles of this life and be ready when our Savior comes again in His glory; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.
Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Gospel reading this morning contains the shortest verse in the Bible, verse 35. Jesus wept. Two words out of 854. Just two words. Yet two very significant words. Two words that show us Jesus’s humanity. Two words that show us Jesus’s sympathy.

On my daughter’s wedding day, she handed me a handkerchief with a hand stitched heart and the letter M for Marjorie. She had anticipated what was about to happen. She knew what was going to happen. We’d begin that long walk down the aisle and we’d be fine until one of us would get emotional. One of us would see someone else crying, and we’d start crying. And then, the other would follow. Her words “don’t start Dad” still ring in my ears. Even just writing about this makes me misty. These of course were and are tears of joy, but we had also shed tears of sadness together. Tears shed at her great grandmother’s funeral. Tears shed at her Grandparents’ funerals. We’re both sympathy criers – seeing those around us cry, either out of joy or sadness, we cry too.

In this morning’s Gospel, John gives us a glimpse of Jesus as both God and man. As John sets the scene, Jesus gets word that Lazarus is ill. Jesus, as God, recognizes the situation for what it is – an opportunity for the Son of God to be glorified. Jesus knows what needs to happen and how it needs to happen. For those of us who are “fixers”, those who want to fix things, Jesus’s delay is remarkable. How could he not go immediately? Yet, Jesus waits. Jesus waits until Lazarus is dead, good and dead, 4 days dead and then goes to Bethany. The disciples are confused. In their minds, when Jesus could have done something, he chooses not to. And now that Lazarus is dead, now he wants to go? What about the Jews who are ready to have Jesus arrested and kill Him? Why would Jesus do that? Why take that chance?

As Jesus arrives in Bethany, the mourning and grieving over Lazarus’s death has already begun. Martha’s exchange with Jesus shows her faith, her understanding that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. She understands the Resurrection of the Dead. Yet, she stands there in tears, suffering the loss of her brother. Mary too comes to Jesus, expressing her dismay and grief. If you had only been here, my brother would not have died. Jesus was touched. Jesus experienced their pain, their agony, their grief, their mourning. Even though Jesus knew what he was about to do, he had sympathy for Mary and Martha. Jesus wept. Jesus knew their suffering; Jesus knew the pain they were experiencing in that moment. Even though that pain would last for only a moment, Jesus wept.

We, like Mary and Martha, are people of faith. God has had mercy on us and called us to faith. God has called us to the waters of Baptism so that we are His children. Like Mary and Martha, because of the faith we have been given, we too are confident in the Resurrection on the last day. We know that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. We have the blessing of the Holy Scriptures, God’s words for God’s people, God’s revelation of himself and God’s plan of salvation. We live in the sure hope of the resurrection, knowing the Jesus has indeed conquered death.

Like Mary and Martha, we too face hardships and trials. Covid-19, the Corona Virus, has changed and is continuing to change the world we live in. Just a few short weeks ago, Corona Virus was a problem in China and a few other places. The World Health Organization declared a pandemic on March 11 and here we are in Illinois under a stay at home order, unsure when things will return to normal and what the new normal will look like. Times of great uncertainty. A virus complicating difficult times. Life as we knew it has been disrupted. A new consciousness about germs, hand washing and hand sanitizers. Businesses forced to close to flatten the curve, to minimize the spread of the virus. Schools closed. Parents working from home. Limits on who and how many can visit the hospitalized and those in assisted living and nursing home settings. Limits on worship, not because it is worship, but to protect the health and welfare of the worshippers by limiting the number of contacts. Churches scrambling trying to identify new ways of ministering to people isolated by this virus.
Families mourning the death of a loved one face restrictions on how many people can attend a funeral. All this on top of the day to day suffering that mars this sinful, fallen world. Suffering on top of suffering.

For some, the mere existence of pain and suffering casts doubts on their faith. Instead of seeing pain and suffering as the result of sin in the world, some incorrectly view pain and suffering as a proof of lack of faith. Some will say “If you only believed more”. “If you had led a better life.” “If you hadn’t doubted”, If you had “fill in the blank” …

And yet, Jesus wept. The Son of God wept. Fully God and fully man, Jesus understands your suffering, just as He understood Mary and Martha’s suffering. Even though Jesus knew that Lazarus’s death was for the Glory of God and that Lazarus’s death would soon be overcome, Jesus wept. Hebrews 2 tells us 17 Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Paul tells the Romans 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, [h] for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28). 6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (romans 5:6). 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.(Romans 5:8). (2 Cor 5:21)

As you walk through these times of suffering, like Mary and Martha, come to Jesus with your suffering, with your lack of understanding, with your sinfulness. Look to Jesus, God Incarnate, who took your sins to the cross and instead gives you His righteousness. Give your suffering to Jesus who suffered, but without sin. Jesus who wept. Jesus who suffered agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus who willingly died at the hands of sinful man to atone for your sins. Jesus who reconciled God to you by His death. Jesus who rose from the dead. Jesus, about whom Paul writes (Romans 8:31-32 ) 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be[h] against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”

May you, like Mary and Martha, turn to Jesus as you face suffering that you may find strength in God’s mercy, and comfort in your salvation. In response to your salvation, serve God and your neighbor in your vocation as you cling to God’s promises of forgiveness, life and salvation, and await the time when every tear will be wiped away, all to the glory and praise of His name. Amen.

And now, may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto eternal life. Amen.