

CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

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FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

March 22, 2026

Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; Saint John 11:1-45

In nomine Jesu!

After that long reading of the Gospel, there are but three points to be made: One about God's love; one about God's message of judgment and promise proclaimed to us; and one about God's call to us and to all who are in Christ.

The first, about God, is in this exchange:

"When Jesus saw Mary weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So, the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'"

See how much God loves us and every child of earth. This is the core of that message. Enough to weep for us when we face death's power. Enough to be with us in and to face with us every "little death" we experience daily. Enough to call us from death to life when we are gathered to God on the other side of the veil between here and eternity. See how God loves us!

The second, about God's message of judgment and promise proclaimed to us, in this exchange:

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." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

The message is that in baptism, Lazarus "R" us! When each of us was baptized, the only death we have to fear was put permanently behind us. It's in our past. The next time we encounter death, it will not be a barrier, but the gateway to everlasting life.

The third, about God's call to us and to all who are in Christ this:

The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to [the disciples], "Unbind him, and let him go."

"Unbind him and let him go." That's our calling from Christ.

Put more directly, Jesus says, "I raise `em! You unwrap `em;" calling us to remove every bond from so all may experience have the "abundant life" God gives us all.

What does this "unwrapping and setting free" entail? Everything you can think of to assist others from the continual actions we take for the sake of others – homeless folks, immigrants, the poor, the otherwise marginalized; to the care we give to one another as LEMs, Community of Hope Chaplains, meal providers, worship enablers, teachers, choir, and staff; to the way we stand up for and advocate for justice and compassion out of Christ's empathy for us. Like so many lists, this one is limited only by our individual and congregational capacity; and is multiplied by our partnerships with other disciples of Christ.

As we conclude our Lenten discipline and look forward to celebrating Christ's resurrection, our new life, and the gift of the Holy Spirit that links Christ and us and our neighbors together, I urge you to consider how you, and we, will respond to Jesus' graveside command. Our joyful and willing response successfully concludes the disciplines of Lent.

I promised a short sermon. In summary, this is it:

See how much [Christ] loves. Behold Christ's cross!

See how, like Lazarus, are raised to new life. Behold Christ' empty tomb!

See how Christ calls us: unbind `em and let `em go! Behold our mission!

Amandus J. Derr
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