

March 29, 2020

Hymn "Amazing Grace" *LSB* 744

1 Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—
 That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
 Was blind but now I see!

2 The Lord has promised good to me,
 His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
 As long as life endures.

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares
 I have already come;
His grace has brought me safe thus far,
 His grace will lead me home.

4 Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail
 And mortal life shall cease,
Amazing grace shall then prevail
 In heaven's joy and peace.

5 When we've been there ten thousand years,
 Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
 Than when we'd first begun.

Text: Public domain

The Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Confession: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us then confess our sins to God our Father. Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 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 justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

The Absolution: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake, God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament Reading is written in the book of Ezekiel, chapter 37, verses 1 to 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. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath^[b] to enter you, and you shall live. And 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.” So 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. And 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. Then 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.” So 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 indeed 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.”

The Epistle Reading is from St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 8 to 14

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 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, 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. 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. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 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. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 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. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus^[d] from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

The Holy Gospel is according to St. John, chapter 9, verses 1 to 17, and 34 to 39.

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” 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.” Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?” 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. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.” After saying these things, he said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he meant taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 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, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe

this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."

Apostles' Creed: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Hymn "How Great Thou Art" *LSB* 801

1 O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed; Refrain

ref Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

2 When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze; Refrain

3 But when I think that God, His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in—
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin; Refrain

4 When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim: "My God, how great Thou art!" Refrain

Text: © 1949, 1953 The Stuart Hine Trust, admin. EMI CMG and Hope Publishing Co. Used by permission:
LSB Hymn License no. 110003136

The Sermon: On the Road to Resurrection

I'm sure that during this time of quarantine and social distancing, you probably have had more time to do things like reading and TV watching. Just the other day, I learned about this cool new feature on Amazon Prime Video. It is called X-ray. Whenever you pause a video on Amazon Prime, a new menu pops up, that allows you to go deeper into the scene. It provides things like who the actors are on screen, the background music or song, with a link to listen or buy. It has things like director commentary or staff stories. Other scenes have links where you can purchase items that you see in the background. Like that clock, or love the character's shoes? They have the link so that you can purchase it on Amazon! It is a new and unique way of entering deeply into movies and TV shows. For our Gospel text today, John 11, I would like to do just that. I would like to pause and focus on a specific and special scene so that we can see all the details. So, let's play the story to get to this special scene.

John starts off by telling us that Lazarus is sick. It is a detail that he wants us to know because he says it five times in the first six verses alone! Lazarus is ill and not doing well. He might not make it. So Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, send messengers to Jesus telling Him that, "**he whom you love is ill.**" The word for

love here is *philew*, which is the word for love used in regards to friends. It means to “show warm affection in intimate friendship.” In other words, they say, “Your close friend is ill!” They tell Jesus to inform Him, like we tell our church family when a loved one is sick. They also hope that Jesus might do something.

When Jesus hears that His close friend is sick, He says, **“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.”** Jesus says that this illness, like it was with the blind man in chapter nine, will be an opportunity for the Father to reveal Christ’s glory, so that all would honor Him like the Father and believe in Him.

And what John does next is strange. He explains Jesus’ actions. He prefaces it with an important point. John says that Jesus loves Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. The word for love here is *agape*. It is a true and deep love. An unconditional love. John stresses that Jesus loves them because Jesus stays put for another two days. It isn’t because Jesus was indifferent, didn’t want to go, or disliked them. Remember, John says that Jesus loved them. Jesus didn’t go right away because He is not moved by external forces, but by God’s will and time. He will help at God’s appointed time. This is an important thing to remember in our current context.

When the time comes to go to Bethany in Judea, the disciples are shocked. They are puzzled why Jesus would go there even though Lazarus is ill and dying. Why are they shocked? The Jews almost killed Jesus twice last time He was there. Why risk death? Jesus responds to their fears by figuratively speaking of daylight and darkness to illustrate that as He, the Light of the World, is with His disciples, they are safe and secure. This applies to disciples of all times and places. It even includes you and me!

As they journey to Bethany, Jesus breaks the news to them that Lazarus has died. How he does it though, is shocking. The disciples think that Lazarus has taken a nap to get better. Jesus bursts that bubble and says, **“Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”** It is shocking to hear Jesus say that He was glad to not be there. However, His joy for that comes in the future growth that His disciples will have in their faith. This moment then leaves us at the edge of Bethany.

As Jesus enters into Bethany, Martha, Lazarus’ sister, goes out to meet Him. At this point, Lazarus has been dead for four days, and the wounds are still fresh, and hurting on her heart. This is the moment and scene that I want to pause, and go deeper into. I would call this scene, “Jesus comforts Martha on the long road to resurrection.” It really is what this scene is all about. Martha knows what *could have been*. She tells Jesus **“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.”** She also knows what *will be*. **“I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”** She is caught in between, isn’t she? Caught between what could have been and what will be. But what could have been and what will be do not change *what is right now*. Her brother is dead. Her Lord is late. And her life is filled with sorrow and grief.

As we go deeper into this scene, we see that this is familiar to us. It is where we spend most our lives...we spend it on the road to resurrection...stuck between what could have been and what will be. Like Martha, when we look to the past, we know what could have been. A personal example from my life was my sister’s cancer. What if some treatments worked better? What if she never got that staph infection? In our lives, we may wonder what if that job panned out? What if that crush said “yes!”? What if I left two minutes earlier and avoided that crash? What if I took better care of myself, or spent more time with my children? What if...we know what *could have been*.

But, also, like Martha, when we look ahead to the future, we know what will be in Jesus. A devotion I read the other day captured this well. A man named Daniel Price recently went to New York City and talked about his experience. Like any big city, there are going to be a large number of beggars, and, at some point, you just get used to it. However, one afternoon, one man caught his attention. He said this man looked like he had been plucked out of one of the Gospels and set on a city sidewalk. This pitiful man sat motionless on a small chair. His age could not be determined because he was so severely burned. The scarring made it impossible to guess. This man had no hair. No eyebrows. No eyelids. No nose. His hands had been amputated, and between his scarred stumps he held his empty Starbucks cup that had some quarters. Daniel couldn’t pass him by. As he approached the man and got out his wallet, he thought, “Jesus would restore this man if He were here. He would give this man what he needs. But I’m not Jesus and I’m a sorry substitute for the Savior.” He said he never wished to be like Jesus more in his life. As he came to the man and gave him some money, he didn’t know what to say. As Daniel put the money in the man’s Starbucks cup, he placed his

hand on his scarred nub and said, “This too will be made new, friend. The resurrection and the life hasn’t forgotten...He is coming for you.” We know that, don’t we? One day Jesus will make all things new, all things well. The cancer will be gone. All mouths will be fed. Back pain will be eliminated. Families will be reunited. You will be made whole, well, and new! But, we have to wait, right? We are on the road to resurrection, like Martha. For now, we stand in the middle of suffering. What could have been and what will be don’t change the present. We see ourselves with Martha in this scene, don’t we?

But to her and to you, Jesus speaks. He says, “**I am the resurrection and the life.**” Did you catch His language? It is significant. It is important. It is life changing. Did you catch the verb? He says, “I am....” That is present. It is now. Jesus *is* the resurrection and the life *now*. He doesn’t point to the past and say, “I was....” He doesn’t point the future and say, “I will be....” This is a present thing! He is that life and resurrection now, for her. He is this *before* raising Lazarus. He is this *before* His resurrection on Easter morning. He is this *before* the final resurrection when all things will be made new and well.

So, the good Lutheran question: what does this mean? As Martha stands there in sorrow, sadness, and suffering, Jesus is the resurrection and life for her. The resurrection is a hand that can be touched, a voice that can be heard, a tear that is shed, and a holy conversation that happens with Jesus. The resurrection and life is a person!

And what does that mean for you? It means that we don’t have to wait until the body comes out of the tomb to participate in the resurrection. Jesus is the resurrection and the life for you, right *now*. A life that is complete, full, and secure in Him, grounded in His death and resurrection. A life that is eternal and unending in Him, *now*. A life out of sin’s clutches and in His mighty, powerful, and loving hand. As a result, we don’t need to silence the suffering, to mask our mourning, or shove away the pain. Instead, we can receive them as holy. Jesus is the resurrection and the life even now, in the midst of suffering, sorrow, stress, and this outbreak. And this is what He gives us: moments of holy conversation on a life-long road to resurrection. Jesus chooses to give and bring the wonders of His life to us now, as we walk that long road to resurrection.

As we do, He renews us each day in baptism. He strengthens us with His Supper and reminds us in that He will come again. He will sustain, support, and guide us by His Word and Spirit. You don’t walk this road alone.

So, let us pause for a time in this story. Let us dive into what is happening. Wherever you may be on that long road to resurrection, Jesus has come to be with you. He is the resurrection and the life, filling your present days with love, life, joy, and grace. That is something to pause on, isn’t it?

Hymn: "A Mighty Fortress" *LSB* 657

- 1 A mighty fortress is our God,
 A sword and shield victorious;
He breaks the cruel oppressor’s rod
 And wins salvation glorious.
The old satanic foe
Has sworn to work us woe.
 With craft and dreadful might
 He arms himself to fight.
On earth he has no equal.
- 2 No strength of ours can match his might.
 We would be lost, rejected.
But now a champion comes to fight,
 Whom God Himself elected.
You ask who this may be?
The Lord of hosts is He,
 Christ Jesus, mighty Lord,
 God’s only Son, adored.
He holds the field victorious.

3 Though hordes of devils fill the land
All threat'ning to devour us,
We tremble not, unmoved we stand;
They cannot overpow'r us.
Let this world's tyrant rage;
In battle we'll engage.
His might is doomed to fail;
God's judgment must prevail!
One little word subdues him.

4 God's Word forever shall abide,
No thanks to foes, who fear it;
For God Himself fights by our side
With weapons of the Spirit.
Were they to take our house,
Goods, honor, child, or spouse,
Though life be wrenched away,
They cannot win the day.
The Kingdom's ours forever!

Text: © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship. Used by permission: LSB Hymn License no. 110003136

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 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 _____ 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.**

The Lord's Prayer: Let us pray the prayer Jesus has 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; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look on You with His favor and give you peace. Amen.

Final Hymn: "Abide With Me" *LSB* 878

1 Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

2 I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

3 Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;
Tears for all woes, a heart for ev'ry plea.
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.

4 Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

5 I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if Thou abide with me!

6 Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.
Text: Public domain

Closing Address: Thanks for joining us for our service today. We ask if you could like, share, and comment below to help this video pop up in the feeds of others. Forward it to a friend. Hopefully in this time of lock down, God's Word can be spread more now than ever! Help us with that task. Keep your eyes open for more services and updates that will be coming your way. Our next one will be on Tuesday, and it will be on Amos confrontation with Amaziah, the priest. The text will be Amos 7:10-17. We also ask if you could continue to help and support the work and ministry that is done at Emmaus. You can do so online with our Give Plus app, or you can send a check into the church office, or bring it in if you need to get out of the house. Again, thanks for joining us for our virtual service, and we hope to see you in person again, soon. God's blessings on the rest of your week.