

5th SUNDAY OF LENT**ST. PETERS ANGLICAN CHURCH BUNDOORA****Sunday 22ND March 2026****Fr. Stephen Monsiegnur****Readings:**¹ Ezekiel 37:1-14 / Psalm 130 / Romans 8:6-11 / John 11:1-45**Theme:** *Hope in the God Who Raises***Ezekiel 37:1-14**

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on 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."

⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹ Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' ¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."

Psalm 130*Waiting for Divine Redemption**A Song of Ascents.*¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.² Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my supplications!

³ If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,

Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But there is forgiveness with you,

so that you may be revered.

⁵ I wait for the Lord; my soul waits,

and in his word I hope;

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⁶ my soul waits for the Lord
 more than those who watch for the morning,
 more than those who watch for the morning.
⁷ O Israel, hope in the Lord!
 For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
 and with him is great power to redeem.
⁸ It is he who will redeem Israel
 from all its iniquities.

Romans 8:6-11

⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed, it cannot, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since 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, then the body is dead because of sin, but 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 give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather, it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having 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 trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble because the light is not in them." ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." ¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." 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. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

²⁸ When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him.³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house consoling her saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”³³ When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.³⁴ He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.”³⁵ Jesus began to weep.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 have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.³⁹ Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because 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 looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me.⁴² I 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.”⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth and his face wrapped in 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 Jesus did believed in him.

SERMON

As we enter the final week of our Lenten journey, the Scriptures invite us into a deep meditation on hope — not optimism, not denial, but the hope that is born when God speaks life into places that have forgotten how to breathe.

At the centre stands Jesus’ declaration to Martha: “*I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die*”². These words are spoken not in abstraction but at a graveside, in the presence of grief, disappointment, and the sting of loss. They are spoken into the very place where hope seems impossible.

Ezekiel knows that place well. In his vision, he is set down in a valley “full of bones” — bones that are “very dry”³. Israel’s despair is total: “*Our bones are dried up, and our*

² John 11:25–26

³ Ezek. 37:1–2

*hope is lost*⁴. Yet God commands the prophet to speak, and as he does, breath enters the bones, sinews form, and life returns. The message is unmistakable: God restores what we cannot restore. God revives what we have given up on. God brings life where death has settled in.

The psalmist does not pretend that faith removes struggle. Instead, he calls out from the lowest places: *“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord”*⁵. Yet even from the depths, he waits with hope, trusting in God’s steadfast love and abundant redemption. Hope, in this psalm, is not a feeling but a posture — a willingness to wait for the dawn even when the night feels endless.

Paul, in Romans, takes this hope further. He reminds the church that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead now dwells in us: *“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you... he will give life to your mortal bodies also”*⁶. Resurrection is not only a future promise; it is a present reality. The Spirit is already at work, loosening the grip of fear, despair, and sin, and drawing us into the life of God.

Lent, then, becomes a season of holy dying and rising. It invites us to let go of what is brittle, fearful, or self-protective within us. The Scriptures insist that God meets us precisely in these places of dying. Ezekiel’s valley is not about avoiding death; it is about God entering death’s territory and transforming it from within. Psalm 130 teaches us that even when we feel buried under the weight of our limits, God’s steadfast love reaches down and lifts us toward life. And Paul assures us that the Spirit who raised Jesus is already breathing new life into our mortal bodies.

This is the pattern of Christian discipleship: death and life, surrender and renewal, letting go and being raised. When Jesus stands before Martha and declares, *“I am the resurrection and the life,”* he is naming a reality that begins now. To believe in him is to allow his life to take root in us, reshaping our desires, our priorities, and our way of seeing the world.

After many weeks of reflection, surrender and prayer, as Holy Week approaches, we are invited to ask: **What in me needs to die so that Christ’s life may rise?** Perhaps it is resentment, fear, or the quiet belief that nothing can really change. Whatever your answer, these are our “dry bones,” the places where hope has thinned. Yet it is precisely here that Jesus speaks his promise: *“Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live”*⁷. Christ meets us in our tomb-places and calls us out, just as he called Lazarus. He does not ask us to resurrect ourselves; he asks us to listen for his voice and step toward his light.

And this rising is never for ourselves alone. When we allow Christ to bring life out of our small daily dyings, we become bearers of that life for others — people who speak hope into dry valleys, who wait with those in the depths, who embody compassion in a world

⁴ (v. 11)

⁵ Ps. 130:1

⁶ Rom. 8:11

⁷ John 11:25

that often chooses hardness. Our Lenten dying and rising equips us to be Christ's light, not by our brilliance but by the radiance of the One who lives in us.

May we walk with Jesus into the mystery of death and life, and may his hope rise within us for the sake of a world longing to breathe again.

Let us pray,
Breathe your life into our dry places, O Christ. Raise what is weary, heal what is wounded, and lead us from death into your light, that we may bear your hope to the world.

References

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Intercessions

Let us pray for the world and for the Church.

1. For the world

God of all nations, as the threat of further conflict grows, breathe your Spirit upon the dry and weary places of the earth. Let it fill the hearts and minds of those in power, raising in them the desire to truly serve society's needs. Where violence destroys, where injustice suffocates, where creation groans, bring wisdom, renewal, peace, and the flourishing of all you have made. In hope we pray, **Lord hear our prayer**

2. For the Church

Life-giving Christ, raise your Church to be a sign of hope. Strengthen and sustain Archbishop Ric, Bishop Janieve, our associate priests Reverend Margaret and Fr Ray; Fr Barry and Jan; our vicar Fr Stephen and his family, Ursula, Louise and Caitlin. and all who lead, serve, and witness in your name. Renew us in faith, embolden us with courage, and fill us with compassion, that we may embody your resurrection life. In hope we pray, **Lord hear our prayer**

3. For our community

God who calls us from the tomb, bless this community and all who live and work among us. We pray for those who serve others, for all whose efforts contribute to our safety and comfort. Inspire us to seek the good among our neighbours, to uphold the vulnerable, to be a welcoming place, and to shine with your light in every place we go. In hope we pray, **Lord hear our prayer**

4. For the suffering

Merciful Lord, draw near to all who cry from the depths: the sick, the grieving, the lonely, the anxious, and those without hope. We pray especially for those seeking our prayers named in the pew sheet. We pray for our sisters and brothers who live in Australia must hope for the safety of family and friends caught in the many wars overseas. Surround them and all in need with your healing presence and raise them into the peace of your Spirit. In hope we pray, **Lord hear our prayer**

5. For the departed and for ourselves

Eternal God, we remember before you those who have died in the faith of Christ. Grant them your everlasting peace. We give thanks for their example, and as we continue our Lenten journey, help us that by their guidance we may die to all that diminishes life, and rise with Christ into the fullness of your love. In hope we pray, **Lord hear our prayer**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

