

Order of Worship for March 22, 2026

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

Opening Hymn: *“Christ, the Life of All the Living”* - Hymn #420 vs. 1-3, 7

Confession and Absolution p. 203

Service of the Word

Gospel Reading – The Raising of Lazarus – John 11:17-27, 38-53

P: Now when Jesus came, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 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.”

Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. 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.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. 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.” When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” 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.”

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what He did, believed in Him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the

children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they made plans to put Jesus to death.

Entrance Psalm:

P: Precious in the sight of the LORD

C: is the death of His saints.

P: I love the LORD, because He has heard

C: my voice and my pleas for mercy.

P: Because He inclined His ear to me,

C: therefore I will call on Him as long as I live.

P: The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;

C: I suffered distress and anguish.

P: Then I called on the name of the LORD:

C: "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!"

P: For You have delivered my soul from death,

C: my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

ALL: Glory be 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.

P: Precious in the sight of the LORD

C: is the death of His saints.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer

P: Lord God, as You brought the dry bones of Israel together and gave them new life, as You called Lazarus from the dead, call us out of our old way of death into the new life we have in Jesus Christ, who lives and rules with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever,

C: Amen.

Hymn: "O Christ, Who Shared Our Mortal Life" – Hymn #552 vs. 1, 9, 10, 4

Old Testament Lesson – Ezekiel 37:1-14

R: 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. 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, "Prophesy 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 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, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, 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 the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' Therefore prophecy, 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."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Epistle Lesson – Romans 8:1-11

R: 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 from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Creed: Second Article and Explanation of the Creed

Children's Message

Sermon Hymn: "What Wondrous Love is This" - Hymn #543

Sermon: "Unplanned Death" – John 11

In the movie *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, Indiana Jones (played by Harrison Ford) and his father (played by Sean Connery) are searching for the Holy Grail—the cup used by Christ at the Last Supper. Toward the end of the movie, as his father is dying from a gunshot wound, Indiana's search for the Holy Grail takes on new intensity. Why is that? Because the Holy Grail is said to bring healing to those who drink from its cup. Indiana follows a book that guides him through a maze of obstacles so he can finally reach the Holy Grail.

Indiana comes to the edge of a canyon—deep and wide—and he’s faced with the impossible. As he studies his book, he realizes that it calls for a step of faith. His father whispers, “You must believe, boy, you must believe.” Indiana looks straight ahead, gathers his courage, and slowly raises one foot into the empty air in front of him.

With a thud, his foot lands on solid ground. The camera shows him standing on a narrow rock bridge. Overcome with relief, he crosses the canyon and discovers the Holy Grail. He chooses wisely, and is able to save his father.

Sooner or later, we will all face a canyon—deep and wide. And that canyon is called death. And cross it we must. But how? Certainly not by our own efforts! Jesus shows us how. Jesus shows us that only through our Baptism into His suffering and death can we safely cross the canyon called death. In John 11, we come to the greatest sign of all—raising Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus and his disciples first hear that Lazarus is deathly ill. Then we find out Lazarus has died. By the time Jesus and the disciples get there, four days late, Lazarus was dead and buried with a stone rolled in front of the tomb, and that was the end. That was the final fact that couldn’t be changed. That canyon of death, deep and wide, couldn’t be crossed. Lazarus was in the tomb, and was not coming out.

When Jesus and his disciples get to Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, the mourning continues. Martha, if you remember from when we read about her elsewhere in the gospels, always had to be doing something. When Jesus had visited their house in happier times, Martha was the one running around the kitchen, straightening the towels in the guest bathroom, being the perfect hostess. And here, again, she has to be doing something. She runs out to meet Jesus as soon as she hears that he is coming. She comes to him and immediately confronts him. “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” (John 11:21)

As the conversation begins, Martha seems to be on top of things. She has the right answers, even in her grief. “I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask” (John 11:22). “I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day” (John 11:24). “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world” (John 11:27). All good answers. All correct answers. Yet all incomplete answers. Because when we jump ahead a bit and Jesus tells them to roll the stone away, Martha’s response is one of disbelief. “But, Lord, by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days” (John 11:39). Martha knew who Jesus was, knew what he could do, but could still not reconcile that with the facts that had been staring her in the face for four days. Lazarus was dead. To Martha, that was a canyon no one could cross, not even Jesus. She may have hoped for healing if he came earlier, but no one could fix death.

Although we didn’t hear that part of the lesson in the reading earlier, Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus sees the same thing. “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:32). The only words she speaks in this story are words of accusation. For Mary, too, that was the end of the story. Jesus had come too late. Lazarus was dead, and there was nothing anyone could do about it. No one could cross that canyon.

Mary's weeping causes Jesus to weep as well. "Jesus wept" is the shortest verse in most English translations of the Bible. In two short words, we see how Jesus experienced the same thing we do. Through the Gospel of John, Jesus often seems to be larger than life, always in control. Yet here we see Jesus weeping, Jesus grieving, over the death of his friend Lazarus and the sadness that Mary and Martha and others are feeling.

Jesus weeps even though he knows what's going to happen. Jesus weeps even though he knows he is going to call Lazarus out of the tomb. Jesus weeps even though he knows that a somber funeral feast will become a celebration of restored life.

But Jesus doesn't stay in his grief. He is the resurrection and the life. He moves away from his grief to doing what he came to do. Jesus stands in front of the tomb of Lazarus, and commands the stone to be rolled away, over Martha's objections. And once that is done, Jesus shouts into the tomb, "Lazarus, come out!" And, still wrapped in his grave clothes, he does. Lazarus had been raised from the dead! His funeral had been ruined, and a gathering of sorrow had been turned into a gathering of joy.

Say this with me. "The dead man came out." Again, a little slower this time. "The dead man came out." I know, you think I'm crazy, but I want you to get the point. The dead man came out! This is the hinge point in John's Gospel. A chink has been found in death's armor. Death has been stripped of its power. Jesus confronts death. Life confronts death. And guess what? Life wins. Death dies and life wins!

As much as Lazarus is the reason for the story, he's not the focus. Jesus is. John keeps our eyes on Jesus as the resurrection and the life. That's the meaning we find. We know that death does not have the final word. We know that death, however it comes, cannot separate from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Christ's resurrection is the key to our own present hope and future glory. He had caused Lazarus to cross the canyon, from death to life.

Lazarus had been raised from the dead, but not for good. He would still die again. This funeral scene was not permanently removed, but was delayed. Death was still as much a part of the world as it is today. Grief and sorrow would come again to the house of Mary and Martha. Lazarus would one day again be wrapped in those grave clothes, placed in a tomb, and have a stone rolled in front of it. And this time there would be no voice shouting from outside the tomb. There would be no one crossing that canyon again.

But that wasn't the end of the story. The story continued to another tomb that also had weeping women, a days-old body, and a stone to roll away. And that story also seemed like it had ended, on the cross. But this other tomb would not be used again. This other tomb would be an end, the end of the reign of death. The voice would not come from outside the tomb, but inside. "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (Luke 24:5-6).

Like Lazarus, we are dead in our tombs. Dead in tombs of our own making, dead in our sin. Wrapped with grave clothes that we cannot get ourselves out of, in situations of sin that trap us behind stones we could never move on our own. But Jesus calls us out of our sin, calls us out of our tombs, and rolls the stone away. Like Lazarus, Jesus has called us out of our tombs, out of death, into new life.

Indiana Jones came to the edge of a canyon—deep and wide. So will we. Only our canyon is called death. How can we cross it? Take a step in faith toward Jesus. Jesus, who died for you. Jesus, who bled for you. Jesus, who forgives you. And Jesus, who loves you. Then Jesus will speak to you, straight from His heart. What will He say? Jesus will say to you, “I am the resurrection and the life.”

Sharing Our Ministry:

Hymn:

“*The Wonderful Cross*” - arr. J. Reeves & C. Tomlin (see screen)

1. When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.

Refrain- O the wonderful cross, O the wonderful cross bids me come and die and find that I may truly live.

2. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.

Refrain- O the wonderful cross, O the wonderful cross bids me come and die and find that I may truly live. O the wonderful cross, O the wonderful cross all who gather hereby grace draw near and bless Your name.

3. See, from His head, His hands, His feet sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such a love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Refrain- O the wonderful cross, O the wonderful cross bids me come and die and find that I may truly live.

4. Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all!

Refrain- O the wonderful cross, O the wonderful cross bids me come and die and find that I may truly live. O the wonderful cross, O the wonderful cross all who gather here by grace draw near and bless Your name.

Prayer of the Church:

The Lord's Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: Almighty God, our Redeemer, in our weakness, we have failed to be Your messengers of forgiveness and hope in the world. Renew us by Your Holy Spirit, that we may follow Your commands and proclaim Your rule of love; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “Lamb of God” - Hymn #550

Postlude