

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

Fifth Sunday in Lent

April 22, 2026

Hope Lutheran Church and School, Idaho Falls, Idaho

Pastor Robert Carabotta

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

A long-time tradition of the Christian Church was to designate the Saturday before Palm Sunday to the reading from John's Gospel, chapter 11, about the Lord Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Even TODAY, among Eastern Christianity called Orthodoxy, Christian worshippers gather on the Saturday before Palm Sunday to read and hear this account of Lazarus being raised from the dead, calling it "The Saturday of Lazarus." And for THEM "The Saturday of Lazarus" BEGINS Holy Week, and this because the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead CANNOT be separated from the chain reaction of events of the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin Council conspiring to arrest JESUS and arranging to have Jesus put to death. Now, it turns out, that historically, Palm Sunday happened about a week after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. But the extent of our reading John 11 stops just short of the apostle John pointing out to EVERYONE, that,

<sup>45</sup> Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen [Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead], believed in [Jesus], <sup>46</sup> but some of them went to the PHARISEES and told THEM what Jesus had done. <sup>47</sup> So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. <sup>48</sup> 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." <sup>49</sup> But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. <sup>50</sup> 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." .... <sup>53</sup> So from that day on they made plans to put [Jesus] to death.

<sup>54</sup> Jesus **therefore** no longer walked openly among the Jews, And so NOW we see a little MORE of WHY so OFTEN after doing miracles, whether raising someone from the dead, casting out demons from human victims, giving sight to the blind, or cleansing a man of leprosy, the Lord Jesus would either TELL THE RECIPIENT of that miracle to NOT TELL ANYBODY ABOUT it,

OR He would go for a while to a SECLUDED place and stay THERE to let the glad accolades and excitement settle. His time had NOT YET COME for His sufferings and death.

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Jesus KNEW that Caiaphas and his Council of rulers would plot to arrest and put Him to death, and He knew their conspiracy to kill Him was **BECAUSE** Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. But news of THIS miracle could NOT BE contained. EVERYBODY who was there to see it happen went EVERYWHERE telling EVERYBODY about it. AND THEREFORE, crowds of those informed of it packed the streets of Jerusalem to welcome and shout Jesus as King and Messiah on that Sunday of the Passover, a Sunday which they made into Palm Sunday, waving palm branches and throwing them on the street before Jesus as He entered Jerusalem, and THIS because Jesus raised Lazarus, a well-known man of Bethany who had been four-days dead, **FROM** the DEAD! The apostle JOHN goes on to repeat,

<sup>57</sup> Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where [Jesus] was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

And JUST so we don't miss this point about the Jerusalem Council's plot to kill Jesus BECAUSE He raised Lazarus from the dead, the apostle John LATER reports to us that,

<sup>9</sup> When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was [in Lazarus' house in the town of Bethany], they came, not only on account of [JESUS] but ALSO to see LAZARUS, whom [Jesus] had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> SO the chief priests made plans to put LAZARUS to death as WELL, <sup>11</sup> because on account of [LAZARUS being raised from the dead by Jesus] many of the Jews were going away and believing in JESUS.

In other words, destroy the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. The Lord Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, after FOUR DAYS of having been dead, is part of the grand setting of our Lord's fast-approaching innocent sufferings and death. So, BECAUSE there IS that connection between Jesus raising our brother Lazarus from the dead AND the CHAIN reaction of JESUS being arrested, tried, beaten, crucified, dead and buried, AND because Jesus died to put OUR sins to death and to redeem us back to God, let us look more CLOSELY at the scene of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, and we will DO this so that we might know that Jesus is also **OUR** compassionate Lord, OUR sovereign Savior, and in seeing how much the death of His friend Lazarus and Mary and Martha's grief MOVED our Lord Jesus to

tears, we will see that Jesus is also OUR friend who has taken on OUR sorrow and pain and death and that even death cannot separate us from Him or His life-giving love for us.

Let's skip to the moment when Martha's sister, Mary, arrived in tears to meet the Lord Jesus who had come to Bethany to console them. John writes:

<sup>32</sup> 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." <sup>33</sup> 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.

Some have taken Jesus' being greatly troubled to mean that He was troubled over the mourners' unbelief which led them to grieve the way they did, but John doesn't give evidence of that in his account, and Mary, Lazarus' sister, is a BELIEVER in Jesus, as is Martha. We heard their confession of faith in Jesus being the Son of God who is able to raise the dead, and even some of the mourners expressed their faith that Jesus could have healed Lazarus to keep him from dying.

Even so, you who by the grace of God and the Word of God and the Holy Spirit BELIEVE in Jesus of Nazareth to be the eternal God in the flesh and YOUR Savior, when death takes a fellow Christian from your presence, and you bury that loved one's body in the earth, you GRIEVE. Your eyes glass over with tears. But your grief doesn't mean that you have stopped trusting in Jesus. Our Lord Jesus says, "BLESSED are those who MOURN, // for THEY shall be comforted." Well, then, why put on a stoic face below your baptized brow when your redeemed spirit is in mourning over the death of a Christian believer? "Blessed are those who mourn," says Jesus, "for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).

John goes on to write:

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw [Mary] weeping, and the Jews who had come with her ALSO weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. <sup>34</sup> And he said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."

And it was at THAT POINT, in seeing those whom He loves weeping, and He asked, "Where have you laid him [that is, his body]?" and they said to Him, "Lord, come and see," it is at THAT POINT that "JESUS WEPT."

The apostle John confines this statement about Jesus' sadness to three words: ἐδάκρυσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, which translated means, "Jesus shed tears." Martin

Luther, the 16<sup>th</sup> century Augustinian monk, pastor, and scholar, who translated the Scriptures from their original Greek into the common German, when he translated this statement of the apostle John, he translated it as, “Und Jesus gingen die Augen über,” “And Jesus’ eyes **brimmed over** with tears.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, our divine Savior who has become true man, is our mediating high priest seated in the highest place, He FEELS WITH US in our sorrows. Isaiah foretold of Christ Jesus, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (53:4a).

YES, the almighty God in the flesh, Christ the Lord, KNEW that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead! YES, the risen Lord Jesus Christ, exalted in the heavens and filling all things, KNOWS that at His return in glory from heaven, He will raise up OUR bodies from the dead to be like HIS GLORIOUS body! BUT, before that happens, He weeps with us. He bears our griefs, and He carries, He feels, our sorrows.

There was something more to Mary and Martha’s tears and the PEOPLE’S tears that moved our LORD to tears. When He said, “Where have you laid Lazarus?” and they said, “Lord, come and see,” our Lord was anticipating the scene. All of this is piling into our Lord’s heart. They took Jesus there, and there He stood, before a cave tomb that had a large stone rolled in front of its entrance that sealed Lazarus’ dead body IN the tomb. Does that sound FAMILIAR? This scene before Jesus’ eyes, blurred with tears, foretells and foreshadows Jesus’ OWN death and burial.

Jesus wept at the tears of those whom He loved and in His going to Lazarus’ tomb. Jesus would soon weep AGAIN in the Garden of Gethsemane because He would KNOW then and there that His arrest was just an hour away and crucifixion and death were the cup that He had to drink, and He prayed, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, NOT MY will, but YOURS be done.” I remember a Christian lady named Mrs. Dale at an assisted living community years ago where I led a weekly Bible study, how she often pointed out in our reading of Jesus’ being tired, or hungry, or weeping, or pleading with His heavenly Father for the cup of suffering to pass from Him, that we too easily forget that Jesus was true **MAN**. Yes, true and almighty God, but the true God who became true MAN. Yes, without sin, but NOT WITHOUT emotion and need.

The true God LOVES us, and we KNOW this because God the SON became our flesh and bore us and our sins and our death in Himself, and He DID this in order to RESCUE us from our sins and to make us alive with Him and to raise US up from sin and death. We see this foreshadowed and foretold in living flesh when

Jesus commanded the people at Lazarus' tomb, saying to them, "Take away the stone." In this the Lord Jesus is giving a prelude to His OWN resurrection from the dead which He would accomplish only a couple of weeks later. "Lazarus!" Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "come out!" and "[Lazarus] who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth" [and] "Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'"

Jesus has risen from the dead, and he will never die again, and because HE lives, WE shall live also.

When Jesus returns in glory from heaven, by the Holy Spirit He will raise up the living and the dead, and He will raise up those who trusted in Him and will transform their and OUR bodies to be like unto HIS glorious body and will give to us eternal life in His glorious kingdom, where we will NEVER AGAIN be bound with death, and we will never be separated from one another or from ANY of His believing people again, and God shall wipe every tear from our eyes. Amen.