

# *South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges*

*Fifth Sunday of Lent – March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

**Prelude:** by Christie Coatsworth

## **Welcome & Announcements:**

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - [Southbuxton.ca](http://Southbuxton.ca) and [Talbotstreet.ca](http://Talbotstreet.ca)

## **Lighting of the Christ Candle:**

### **Call to Worship:**

**Eric:** Come out of the depths of the wilderness of all that has been lost.

**People:** Push away the stone and wonder what glory could be.

**Eric:** We believe that there is more than this sorrow.

**People:** Come out into the morning light and find others waiting and hoping for love to mend hearts again. Our souls come together to watch and wait.

**Eric:** Come, let us worship.

### **Opening Hymn:** VU 326 “For A Thousand Tongues...”

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
my great Redeemer's praise,  
the glories of my God and King,  
the triumphs of God's grace.

Jesus! the name that charms our fears,  
that bids our sorrows cease;  
'tis music in the sinner's ears,  
'tis life and health and peace.

He speaks, and listening to his voice,  
new life the dead receive,  
the mournful broken-hearts rejoice,  
the humble poor believe.

Hear him, you deaf; you voiceless ones,  
your tongues again employ;  
you blind, behold your Saviour comes,  
and leap, you lame, for joy!

My gracious Master and my God,  
assist me to proclaim,  
to spread through all the earth abroad

the honours of your name. \*\*

### **Prayer of Confession:**

**People:** New life confronts us, O God. We notice signs of spring and the profusion of summer growth, the abundance of autumn and the tenacity of life in winter. We praise you for a world so full of beauty. Your creative love and energy surround us, renewing and regenerating a planet that continues to evolve.

Yet we are also confronted by death: accidents and disease separate us from loved ones, forest life and farmland are destroyed by industry and development; cultures and languages disappear, and people lose their sense of identity. We wrestle with unanswered questions and feelings of despair, and we're not always sure how to find our way through this wilderness. Too often, we feel buried by what we will never understand. Hold us in your grace.

### **Reflection Music: "Hold Us in Your Grace"**

### **Words of Affirmation:**

**Eric:** God does not abandon us to death and despair. Whatever has happened, whatever our fears for the future, God's compassion and steadfast love surround us.

**People:** We are forgiven. We are loved, and God invites us again to live fully.

### **Children's Story & Lord's Prayer:**

### **Children's Hymn: VU 378 "Spirit of God, Descend..."**

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;  
wean it from earth, through all its pulses move;  
stoop to my weakness, strength to me impart,  
and make me love you as I ought to love.

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,  
no sudden rending of the veil of clay,  
no angel visitant, no opening skies,  
but take the dimness of my soul away.

Have you not bid me love you, God and King;  
all, all your own, soul, heart, and strength and mind?  
I see your cross: there teach my heart to cling.  
O let me seek you and O let me find!

Teach me to love you as your angels love,  
one holy passion filling all my frame,  
the baptism of the heaven-descended dove,  
my heart an altar and your love the flame. \*\*

### **Scripture: John 11: 1 - 45 (Video of Lazarus)**

## **Reflection: “Out of the Depths”**

When we are overwhelmed or in despair, we are reminded to turn to God, to lift us up. God breathes the Holy Spirit into us and give us new life, so that we may walk in hope. Hope is not about what we expect. Hope is believing in the unknown, yet looking for the breaks and surprises. Even if we expect miracles, we do not know when and where to them. We may not know the details, but we trust that God does know and God will not leave us alone.

In John’s story today of raising Lazarus from the dead, there are similarities to Jesus’ journey that we will experience in two weeks. The conversations between Jesus and the disciples seem very disjointed, especially if you do not know the rest of the story. It is at the end of the story that Jesus actually raises Lazarus from the dead. John shares at the end of the narrative that some people, “believed in him.”

The Jewish understanding was that it took three days for a soul to leave the body completely; thus, Lazarus had been dead long enough to have nothing left other than a body decaying rapidly in the desert heat. This fact doesn’t quite explain Jesus’ delay. When Jesus does decide to return to Judea, the disciples are concerned for his safety, but the need to “work while it is still light” drives Jesus on. Thomas expresses loyalty and fear, but encourages the disciples to go with Jesus to Bethany, even if it meant death.

Burial took place immediately after death in the hot climate of the Middle East, and ritual mourning followed. The family of the deceased - especially the women, sat in the home and were visited by friends. However, when Jesus approaches, Martha defies custom and goes to meet him. Was she impatient for his arrival, or was she protecting Jesus from a potentially hostile gathering?

Martha understands the Jewish teaching of resurrection at the last days. In today’s story Martha finds something hopeful in what Jesus says. She puts her faith entirely in him.

Mary’s plea to Jesus is similar to Martha’s, and the sadness of the situation disturbs Jesus greatly. Martha, Mary, and the assembled mourners all ask the same question – why didn’t Jesus come and heal Lazarus?

Jesus offers the prayer, which sums up the purpose of this final “sign”. God’s glory will indeed be revealed, but at enormous pain and cost to both Jesus and his friends. Jesus then issues three commands; “Lazarus come out”, “Untie him” and “Let him go”. Everyone has a task to do. Jesus calls Lazarus back to life. The

community rolls away the stone and the community unties Lazarus from the clothes of death and let him go.

There is a lot going on in our world today. We may wonder where God is in all the senseless killings, tragedies, and destruction. Today, in the face of similar challenges, God invites us to read the stories of new life and new hope. There are places in our world that are in desperate need of new life or resurrection. How do we as the Church offer new life and resurrection?

There are times in our lives that our sense of hopelessness is real. We experience collective grief at the loss of vast amounts of innocence, understanding, and camaraderie. Like Mary and Martha, we may want to confront God with anger: if you had been here, such and such would not have happened. We think about that when we get overwhelmed by the senseless mass shootings, or the destruction of typhoons, tornadoes, mud slides, forest fires and hurricanes. We may have asked that question on September 11 of 2001, when the planes crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City.

When confronted with these realities, it is vital for us as humans to explore the concept of hope. Hope that is transformative and lasting may need to come slowly. Hope is far more important than getting bogged down in the arguments over why this or that happened. As Christians, we hold on to and share the hope promised to us in Scripture.

With most arguments about Scripture, the point is not about whether or not scripture has been fulfilled - the important point is that God can bring us hope, when hope seems gone for us. We celebrate that even in despair, even when the world seems to be plotting against God, still God says, "I will bring life. I will create new things out of the ashes. I created new life for Jesus, and I will create new life for each and every one of you."

With the promise of new life, Jesus raises Lazarus from the grave. With the promise of new life, we have hope – hope that we are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

**Reflection Hymn: VU 710 "Shall We Gather at the River"**

Shall we gather at the river,  
where bright angel feet have trod;  
with its crystal tide for ever  
flowing by the throne of God?  
*Yes, we'll gather at the river,*

*the beautiful, the beautiful river;  
gather with the saints at the river  
that flows by the throne of God.*

Ere we reach the shining river,  
lay we every burden down;  
grace our spirits will deliver,  
and provide a robe and crown. R

Soon we'll reach the shining river,  
soon our pilgrimage will cease,  
soon our happy hearts will quiver  
with the melody of peace. \*\* R

### **Invitation to Share Our Gifts:**

**Eric:** As we offer our gifts to God, we also bring with us our faltering steps, our brokenness, our hopes, our risking and our hearts, that as God transforms our gifts, God will also transform us to be God's blessed people. We give as an act of gratitude and worship.

### **Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

### **Offertory Prayer:**

**People: People: God of life, you invite us to share life. We offer these gifts of money and pray that they may bring life and hope to those who receive them. Amen.**

### **Prayer Hymn: MV 66 "Senzeni Na?" (What Have We Done?)**

Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na?  
Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na?  
Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na?  
Senzeni Na? Senzeni Na?

### **Pastoral Prayer:**

### **Closing Hymn: VU 675 "Will Your Anchor Hold..."**

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?  
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife,  
when the strong tides lift and the cables strain,  
will your anchor drift or firm remain?  
*We have an anchor that keeps the soul*

*steadfast and sure while the billows roll,  
fastened to the rock which cannot move,  
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!*

It will surely hold in the straits of fear,  
when the breakers tell that the reef is near;  
though the tempest rave and the wild winds blow,  
not an angry wave shall our bark o'erflow. R

It will surely hold in the floods of death,  
when the waters cold chill our latest breath;  
on the rising tide it can never fail  
while our hopes abide within the veil. R

When our eyes behold, through the gathering night,  
the city of gold, our harbour bright,  
we shall anchor fast by the heavenly shore,  
with the storms all past for evermore. \*\* R

**Benediction:**

**Eric:** Go in the strength of God who shows steadfast love, now and forever more!

**Sending Out Hymn: MV 71 “When the Wind of Winter...”**

When the wind of winter blows  
bringing times of solitude,  
fill the silent icy night,  
be our hearts' compassion.

*Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter,  
Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter.*

**Amen, Amen, Amen.**

**Postlude:** – Christie Coatsworth

**Prayers:** - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service.  
It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

**Cancer:**

**Chris  
Paul  
Carol  
Maureen  
Susan**

**Cara  
Margie  
Marcus  
Susan  
Ingrid  
Jerry**

**Reg and Mary Jane**  
**Dave**  
**Bill**  
**Jane**  
**Donna**  
**Martin and Family**  
**Larry**  
**Kerigan**  
**Fran**  
**Ken**  
**Natalie**  
**Ruth**  
**Dave**  
**Marj**

**Sue**  
**Evelyn**

**Richard and Evelyn**  
**Elaine**  
**Wayne**

**Ed Sykes**  
**Arley Smith**  
**Eric**  
**Ron**  
**Wes**