**modified service- 5th sunday of lent**

**zion ev. lutheran church, philipsburg**

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**PSALM: Psalm 130**

1Out | of the depths
  I cry to | you, O Lord;
 2O Lord, | hear my voice!
  Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my | supplication.
 3If you were to keep watch | over sins,
  O Lord, | who could stand?
 4Yet with you | is forgiveness,
  in order that you | may be feared.
 5I wait for you, O Lord; | my soul waits;
  in your word | is my hope.
 6My soul waits for the Lord more than those who keep watch | for the morning,
  more than those who keep watch | for the morning.
 7O Israel, wait for the Lord, for with the Lord there is | steadfast love;
  with the Lord there is plen- | teous redemption.
 8For the Lord shall | redeem Israel
  from | all their sins.

**GOSPEL: John 11:1-45**

The holy gospel according to John.

1Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. 3So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” 4But 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.” 5Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, 6after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.
  7Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” 8The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” 9Jesus 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. 10But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.” 11After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.” 12The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” 13Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. 14Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. 15For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” 16Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

  17When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. 18Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, 19and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” 23Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” 24Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” 25Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” 27She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

  28When 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.” 29And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. 30Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31The 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. 32When 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.” 33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” 35Jesus began to weep. 36So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” 37But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

  38Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39Jesus 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.” 40Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” 41So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42I 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.” 43When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44The 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.”

  45Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

**reflection-** Psalm 130, John 11:1-44

 A lament is defined as a passionate expression of grief or sorrow, and our readings today certainly have their share of lament and anguish. In Psalm 130 we hear the psalmist cry “Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD; LORD, hear my voice!” In our gospel reading, both Mary and Martha lament to Jesus crying “Lord if you would have been here, my brother would not have died.” For Mary and Martha, the pain of losing their brother Lazarus was overwhelming.

 Our reading from John is one of the most powerful stories in the gospels. It is human, authentic, and honest. It is here that we read of Jesus’ humanity in verse 35, where it simply states, “that Jesus began to weep.” This is an emotionally sincere testimony to the truth of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, that Jesus was human just like the rest of us. Mary and Martha were weeping, the Jewish folks were greatly disturbed; the grief and pain were prevalent.

 It seems that our world right now is in a place of lament. We cry out to God in our pain and anguish, in our anxiety and fear, in our loneliness and isolation asking where God is, in all that is going on around us. We are like the psalmist, we are like Mary and Martha, we lament.

 I too have cried out to God in lament this week and I found solace in listening to my favourite hymn “*It Is Well With My Soul*” written by Horatio Spafford in 1873. Spafford was a lawyer with a deep faith in God, whose life was filled with tragedy. In 1870 his 4-year-old son died of scarlet fever; in the following year, all his businesses were destroyed in the Great Chicago Fire. Knowing that these events had taken a great toll on his family he planned a vacation for himself, his wife Anna, and four daughters to travel to England. In the days before the trip, Horatio realized that he had a business meeting that could not be changed so he persuaded his family to go ahead and he would meet them at a later date. The family boarded the ship and were on their way across the Atlantic when it collided with another ship and sank in 12 short minutes. Several days later he received a telegram from his wife with 6 words on it “Saved alone. What shall I do?”[[1]](#footnote-1)

 Horatio boarded another ship soon after to join his grieving wife and the captain of that ship called to him when they were near the spot where the tragedy occurred. In looking out over the vast expanse of water, he knew that his children were safely in the arms of God. He returned to his cabin and wrote the lyrics of the hymn that is still a favourite of many today.

It Is Well With My Soul[[2]](#footnote-2)

When peace like a river attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
"It is well, it is well with my soul."

Refrain (may be sung after final stanza only):
It is well with my soul;
it is well, it is well with my soul.

2 Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
let this blest assurance control:
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
and has shed his own blood for my soul.

The hymn is a lament, but Horatio also wrote of a deep faith and trust in God to help him overcome the challenges he was facing. He trusted in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, knowing that the grace and mercy of a loving God was with him not only in his life ever after, but also in the in the present, in the here and now, in the challenges and pain.

 Jesus explains the same thing to Martha in our gospel reading today. There is good news in the resurrection, there is hope in knowing that abundant life with God is here with us in the here and now, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Christians we believe in the power of resurrection and it gives us strength and courage to tackle and live into these days of uncertainty and anxiety.

 When we lament our worries to God we are confident that God is present. We are confident that God hears our cries and that God’s hands are at work in the world; even if it feels like the weight of the world is bearing down on us, in all of it we know, it is well with our souls. Brothers and sisters of Christ may the peace, strength, and courage of God be with each of you this week.

Amen

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION \***

Acknowledging our broken world, we come to God in prayer, asking for faith and healing.

God of love, we are broken; we are isolated; we are sick, and we are dying; and, like Martha, we wonder why you do not come. Thank you for listening to our complaint. In your unbounded mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of love, we are mourning; we are crying; we are in pain, and, like Mary, we wonder why you have not stepped in. Thank you for crying with us. In your unbounded mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of love, your church is cut off; we are unable to gather, and like the crowds, we feel powerless in the face of this overwhelming reality. Thank you for letting us hear your prayer. In your unbounded mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of love, we are conscious of so much need; we are surrounded by discouragement; we are overwhelmed with the desperation of so many people, so many causes, so much pain, and like Mary, Martha and the crowds, we only seem capable of hearing our own anxiety. Thank you for your silent compassion which provides us a safe place to be. In your unbounded mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of love, we are aware of those who are sick, those who care for them, those whose work is suddenly dangerous, those who cannot work, those who are attempting keep us safe, and those whom we name before you including Eddie, Zach, Elaine, Betty and those we name in the silence of our hearts. We thank you for your promise that nothing will separate us from your love. In your unbounded mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of love, we crave your presence; we crave your healing; we crave your life, and like Lazarus, we wait for your call. Thank you for coming. In your unbounded mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Trusting the promise of mercy, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who 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.**

**BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**Amen.**

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\*Prayers written by Rev. Rick Pryce

1. Kelly Goshorn, “Inspiring Stories Behind It Is Well With My Soul,” accessed March 26, 2020, <https://kellygoshorn.com/archives/2018/03/the-inspiring-story-behind-it-is-well-with-my-soul>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hymnary.org, “It Is Well With My Soul,” accessed March 28, 2020, <https://hymnary.org/text/when_peace_like_a_river_attendeth_my_way> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)