



[Ezekiel 37:1-14](#), [Romans 8:6-11](#), [John 11:1-45](#), [Psalm 130](#)

Good morning.

With a number of gifted preachers on staff, it's a bit unusual that I have the opportunity to preach two Sundays in a row. So, I am grateful for that.

I don't know if you ever noticed this, but the scripture readings and sermons for each Sunday here at St. Mary's are later posted online as an audio recording, with a link both on our GodsView.org website as well as on many of the same platforms that you get your podcasts from, like Spotify, or Apple Music. They are listed under "St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Anchorage."

Over the past few days, I went back on Spotify and listened to some recent sermons that I've preached, and I came away with a concern. There seems to be, in those sermons, at least those that I have preached, an emphasis on the social, economic, or maybe even the political implications of the Gospel on those days.

On one hand, this is right and fitting. The Gospel itself is inherently political, and social, and economic, and any attempt to avoid that leaves us with something that is highly domesticated and not really the whole Gospel at all.

But the Gospel is also deeply personal and intimately relational as well. I believe that the political, the social, the economic, *and the deeply personal and intimately relational* cannot really be separated from one another in living out faith in daily life.

If Jesus' teaching and ways of being in the world *only* dealt with one's interior belief and religious piety, then it is unlikely that he would have been seen as such a threat to both the dominant religious establishment of his time, and to the Roman occupiers of Judea. The Romans, for example, didn't really care what you personally believed in your heart, as long as you didn't threaten the political, cultural and religious way things were. And Jesus, of course, very much threatened this status quo.

But the Gospel can never be successfully reduced to any one particular political philosophy, or a social cause, or even solely as a movement toward human dignity, freedom, or equality. It may implicate any or all of things in a profound way, but it is always so much more than that.

It is also a matter of the heart as well as the head. One of the treasures that needs to be rescued from the wreckage of much of modern American conservative evangelicalism is the beautiful language and tradition of speaking of us and God-in-Jesus, in the language of “personal relationship.”

Today’s scripture passage, the Raising of Lazarus, provides a window into that; it is an opportunity to reflect on the intimate, relational aspects of Jesus and the Gospel.

Today’s story is that of the raising of Lazarus, and its placement in the Gospel of John prefigures Jesus’ own resurrection still to come, and is yet another of the “signs” in John’s Gospel that point to who Jesus was as the Messiah, the one theology will come to call the holy “Son of God.”

But today’s Gospel account of the Raising of Lazarus also brings us “up close and personal” to the “Fully Human” side of One whom Christian theology reveals is both “fully human” and “fully divine.”

Here is a portion of a Lenten reflection that comes from a friend of mine, Bill Mallonee.¹ The full text of it is on the counter out in the narthex, (or gathering area).

“The scene is the one where Jesus is brought word that his good friend Lazarus is very, very sick. Interestingly, even oddly, He waits a few days before

¹ Bill Mallonee was the leader of Vigilantes of Love, a promising young band that came out of Athen Georgia in the decades-long wake of R.E.M., (a band that had its first public performance, by the way, on April 5th, 1980 at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church on Oconee Street in Athens, Georgia.¹) After a decade in the music industry, Bill found his way to the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of Northern New Mexico and made some of the most impressive Americana, producing over sixty albums of non-commercial music about life and faith. Paste Magazine has named him “one of the fifty best living American songwriters.”

heading out to visit Lazarus. He even informs his disciple[s]/friends that Lazarus has died. But he also tells them to have some faith. "Wait," he basically says. "The 'Last word' on the subject hasn't been spoken yet."

Jesus arrives at the tomb. Lazarus has been dead for 3 days. He stares at the stone sealed over the entrance as was the practice in ancient times. He is oblivious to the murmurings and goading of his detractors who are also there. He is lost in memory, the loving memories of his friend.

Now, here's the curious thing:

The Greek text says something that have been translated as "Jesus groaned in spirit," that He was "troubled."

But the explanation (exegesis) that I have heard says that He was angry. Jesus.

Angry.

It is a moment that draws one up short.

Jesus.

Groaning with anger.

Angry at death,

Angry at loss,

Angry at grief,

and all that it has is robbed from his friend,
from us.

Angry at all that is absurd.

To me, it was and still is, explosive.

Think about it: The Son of God. (Or whatever name you wish to ascribe to Him)...is angry.

Angry at death.

Angry at a universe that is brutish, cruel and without explanation



"Everything dies, baby,
that's a fact..."

- "Atlantic City".

Bruce Springsteen

There is more to come here:

If all the claims about Him are true, what follows is the most pure, loving, & transparent gesture ever made by a human being on this earth.

The Bible says: "Jesus wept."

The shortest verse.

And the one with loudest bombshell of Grace.

Got it? Has it registered?

The weeping Christ feels the same way about death...as you do.

No dressing it up.

No "dumbing it down."

No minimizing the horror or futility of it.

This is something to weep bitter, angry tears over.

"Jesus wept."

It is an overwhelming display of tenderness.

What does this mean?

What does it mean to have the Son of God weep at your graveside, at my graveside?

It, at the very least, means this:

You are not alone.

You are not alone in your anger at death;

Not alone in your fear of death;

Not alone in your anger of all that goes lost, unfulfilled, unfinished when death shows up;

Not alone in your anger even at God for "allowing" such an atrocity/interruption/tragedy to happen."²



**"Maybe one day,
baby, everything
comes back..." ~
Bruce Springsteen**

² Bill Mallonee, <https://songsforthejourneyandbeyond.wordpress.com/>, Posted Easter Week 2023; accessed March 21, 2026.

As we move forward in this world of ours, a world in which we behold beauty and know joy, but also a world that reveals the pain and brokenness of Creation, a world very much presently at war, a world of divisiveness, a world of illness,

One thing is certain. We are not alone. For the crucified and yet risen Christ walks with us, through all that has been, and all that will be.

“Jesus wept.”

Amen.

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What is above is only a portion of Bill’s reflection on this Fifth Sunday of Lent. The remainder is what follows:

“There is no glossing it over or prettifying this life.

Sermonize it, eulogize it, Oprah-ize it...

We all, one way or another, “leave the party” too soon.

Holy Week.

Is it symbolic for all of this journey we call Life?

If, so, here’s what you can bet on:

Take up your cross, so to speak. That cross of your human existence.

You can count bet on your heart being broken...a million times.

You can count on your dreams being dashed;

You can count on your best intentions being ignored or, worse, misunderstood.

You can count on losing those who are nearest & dearest.

You can count on knowing loneliness on a first name basis.

But count on this as well:

You are not alone.

Something always seems to be “lurking” at the edges of our days,

even the darkest of them.

A "last word," perhaps?

I find this sort of "incongruity" a quiet witness to the truth of the faith.

The bad news comes first, before the "good news" makes sense.

The human-ness of Jesus.

So utterly perfect that He can grieve perfectly the loss of his dear friend, be angry about it...and still be Lord, God, Savior.

He doesn't offer explanations as to why evil exists.

In tears and tenderness He just weeps at Lazarus' tomb.

And I suspect He weeps at every tomb.

So, how does this affect you and me in the here and now?

Easter is often offered to us in a sanitized, neutered version.

Complete with bonnets, new dresses, colored eggs and bunnies. Nature rejoices. There's a lot to be said and celebrated about the energy of God's Love within the life force.

Still, I think, we are lulled into missing the point.

Easter, as the Bible tells it, is the grittiest of the Church's remembrances.

The events of Holy Week are a crystallization & distillation of all that can "go wrong" in the world...and within our lives.

Holy Week's pages are filled with accounts of friends who "pledge allegiance."

Loud, self-inflated boasters who say they'll follow a friend even unto death.

And then they don't. They cut and run.

How many times have we done likewise, when a bit of heroism was called for?

When given their chance to be courageous arrives?

Their cowardice manifests itself from every word & deed...

Holy Week's pages are peppered with feckless & conniving "climbers" who will sell a friend out just to save their own skin and possibly get ahead.

*Easter's sad pages are also filled with folks of good heart;
They haul bodies off of bloody instruments of torture and death. They try and
bestow what little honor is left on a Body so disfigured by human hatred &
violence that It's hardly recognizable.*

*Good folks (or at least aspiring to be so) who heard the most astonishing
words ever spoken to humankind.*

Just like we do every Sunday morning.

*In Scripture, Easter week is filled with "Good-Hearted," "Nodding-In-
Agreement," "I'll-never-sell-you-short, Jesus," people who cut and run at the
first sign of confrontation or challenge.*

We do it all the time.

It's a big club.

We've made it an art form.

And so, one of Easter Week's lessons is simply this:

Be not deceived.

Neither you nor I are not made of such stern stuff.

And because of that, Jesus wept, as well.

He has reason to weep.

He is weeping still.

Weeping at all of the vain glories we chase after.

Weeping at the 2 bit, cheap idols we "buy," deify and cling to.

Weeping at all the betrayals we'll no doubt tally up as we live out our days.

*Weeping anew at the war machines we create and surround with rhetoric like
"patriotism," "national interests," "our way of life," and "Glory."*

All dressed up in with rhetoric with names of concepts that annihilate Life.

*He's weeping still at the harsh words, judgements and criticisms we
thoughtlessly cut each other to pieces with, often in the name of His religion.
Weeping at the love & kindness & compassion we withhold from one another.*

Jesus. Weeping. Endlessly weeping. Perpetually weeping

He weeps at every tomb, even now,

I suspect, in some way, He is weeping at our own tombs.

The ones, like Lazarus, we will one day enter.

The Lord of Life, The Son of God.

Closer than a Brother.

You, dear lost, lonely, sinful, scared traveler...are never alone.

Limitless in His Mercy, Grace and tear-stained Consolations.

Tears are one of those things, The Good & Gracious Savior has never run out of.

You will hear His voice, just as Lazarus did.

You'll shake off the shroud of death, and perhaps, with stumbling steps, move into the light & towards that Voice.

New skin. Radiant as a new-born baby.

And, falling into His arms, you will recognize that voice of Tenderness & of Love Itself.

And when that day arrives you may well find some of His blessed tears on your new suit of clothes, as well. "³"

³ Bill Mallonee, <https://songsforthejourneyandbeyond.wordpress.com/>, Posted Easter Week 2023; accessed March 21, 2026.

Scripture Appointed for Today:

The Collect

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Old Testament - 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. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 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."

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. 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. 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." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

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.' 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. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 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.

The Psalm - Psalm 130

1 Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice; *
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

2 If you, Lord, were to note what is done amiss, *
O Lord, who could stand?

3 For there is forgiveness with you; *
therefore you shall be feared.

4 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; *
in his word is my hope.

5 My soul waits for the Lord,
more than watchmen for the morning, *
more than watchmen for the morning.

6 O Israel, wait for the Lord, *
for with the Lord there is mercy;

7 With him there is plenteous redemption, *
and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

The Epistle - Romans 8:6-11

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 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, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

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. But if Christ is in you, though 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 from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

The Gospel - John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." 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." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" 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. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will

give you whatever you ask of him.” 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. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

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

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 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.” 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 looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you for having heard me. 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.” When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 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.”

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

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What Jesus Didn't Do

“Notice what Jesus does not do. He does not see their pain and grief as an opportunity to talk about sin, repentance, of the fires of hell. And he does not use the tragedy as a chance to inflate the ranks of his own followers or give some theological explanation for the illness and death of Lazarus...What he does do is share in their grief. By doing so he acknowledges the wrongness of death, the bitter pain that it brings, and the reality of its sting....But Jesus does more than weep with Mary and Martha. He then raised Lazarus from the grave (John 11:43-44). He undid what death had done. He repaired what was broken.”⁴

⁴ Skye Jethani, quoted at: <https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/how-not-to-respond-to-a-natural-disaster>

Song File / Playlist

Lyrics to: COMING OUT OF HIDING music/lyrics: bill mallonee (BMI 2009)

I heard you were mother's pride and joy
she was pretty young when she had that baby boy
you were up against the powers...and down with the man at the start
You had a hunger in your belly and the fire in side your heart

you said mysterious things like: "living looks more like dying."
Now, you're coming outta hiding

I heard they called your mother 'bout every name under the sun
I heard you turned your cheek a lot and bit your tongue
You had a knack for making friends who couldn't pay you back
spending your coins on the wrong side of the tracks

picking up the tab after all that wining and dining
now, you're coming outta hiding

spent some time in the underground just to get the lay of the land
spent some time with the sick to take them all on vacation
spent some time in the jail just to let the prisoners loose
spent some time on the gallows just to cut the hangman's noose

all of these reversals are just a reminding
that you're coming outta hiding

I heard they kicked you to curb when your show went down like a storm
heard they stole your crown...and gave you one of thorns
You know when love gets close it can be perceived as a threat
and God, you know we've got so much...to protect

I hear your love is always and ever abiding
and you're coming outta hiding

(outtro)

"Coming Out of Hiding", from [WPA Vol. 3/Farthest Edge of Town/Bill Mallonee](#) by [Bill Mallonee](#)

The music can be found and downloaded at: <https://billmalloneemusic.bandcamp.com/track/coming-out-of-hiding>