

Service for Sunday, March 29, 2019 – Provided via Elim’s website, Email, and Facebook

Greeting

Grace and peace from our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

The Word

A reading for you today from the 130th Psalm:

<A Song of Ascents.> Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. ² Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! ³ If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. ⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; ⁶ my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. ⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. ⁸ It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities. (Psalm 130:1 NRSV)

Today’s Gospel is from 11th Chapter of John: **Glory to You, O Lord. (1-45 cut)**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." ⁴ 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." ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. ⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." ¹² The disciples

said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." ¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." ²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ²⁴ Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" ²⁷ She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." ²⁸ 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." ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ 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. ³² 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." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" ³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ 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." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² 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." ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ 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." ⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. (John 11:1-45 NRSV)

The Word of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

(New Sermon) Today we are in the midst of unknowns. Unknowns that can be frightening. Unknowns that we've never faced before in our lifetimes. The Corona Virus and disease and infection can be scary. But it is important to remember that nothing unknown is too big for God. God shares God's glorious light with us by the Son of God and Son of Man.

If you look back at our Ash Wednesday service, we put dust on each other's foreheads, and we heard the words, "You are dust and to dust you shall return." Dust. The dust of creation where God breathed life into Adam, created from dust. And the dust that reminds us of humanity and our sins – for we will return to dust. How often we see God use dust, God's medium of choice. Life created from dust and death back to dust again.

And once again, we see a story where another of God's miracles revolves around dust. Jesus spat into the dust and put the mud on the man's eyes -the man born blind. If you take notice, the text for today doesn't say blind man, but a man born blind. Here in this text the focus is not on the man's blindness nor the cause of his blindness but on the opportunity for God's works of healing. You might have perceived that Jesus says, "The works of him who sent me." God's good work in this world.

Jesus also says that "We must work the works of God who sent me." We. It is not just Jesus doing the work that God desires. It is Jesus' followers, we – we are the followers, we are the disciples of Jesus. And we are called to do God's work. And we are sent – just as the man born blind was sent to Siloam to wash his eyes so he could see. And do you want to know what the Hebrew word Siloam means? It means sent. Sent.

And did you hear Jesus say, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." That word light certainly is appropriate, for a blind person cannot see, and we cannot see in the dark. So there is a double meaning here. Jesus is the light until his work on the cross is done – "as long as I am in this world." But Jesus is also the light. Remember the verse from John, Chapter 1, verse 5? *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.* Jesus Christ shines with the light of God and nothing, absolutely nothing, can be brighter, can outshine God's most Holy Light, the Light of Jesus, the Christ.

These verses referring to the Light, are so important in this dark time, when no one knows when or where this virus will attack. But when things in our lives seem overtaken by darkness, we can know, without a doubt, that nothing is too unknown, nothing is too big, nor is anything too dark for the Light that radiates from God.

Jesus came as a light to the world. The Son of Man is the One who shines to expose the darkness in this world and to heal the world from its sins. And because Jesus' actions are for the good of all, we are sent out to shine in the world that needs the light of Christ more than ever. In today's Gospel, the word Siloam means sent and that is the place the man who was born blind was sent to wash away the mud from his eyes. He was sent and we are sent. He was blind but now he sees.

Be the light of the world, my friends. You are sent, sent to shine with the light of the One who loves with a love that passes all understanding. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

God of life, bind your faithful people into one body. Enliven the church with your Spirit and bless the work of those who work for its renewal (*like Hans Nielsen Hauge, whom we commemorate today*). Accomplish your work of salvation in us and through us, for the sake of the world. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of life, you love the world you have made and you grieve when creation suffers. Restore polluted lands and waterways. Heal areas of the world ravaged by storms, floods, wildfires, droughts, or other natural disasters (*especially*). Bring all things to new life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of life, show redemption to all who watch and wait with eager expectation: those longing for wars to cease, those waiting for immigration paperwork to finalize, those seeking election, and those in dire need of humanitarian relief. Come quickly with your hope. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of life, you weep with those who grieve. Unbind all who are held captive by anxiety, despair, or pain, especially those we name in our hearts before you. Fill us with compassion and empathy for those who struggle, and keep us faithful in prayer. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of life, we give thanks for opportunities for this congregation to collaborate with our community in caring for the needs of our neighbors. (*Particular ministry partnerships may be named.*) Strengthen our ties with other local congregations, agencies, and services. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of healing, we pray for this world as we deal with the unknowns around this virus. Protect those who are not ill, heal those who are, and give comfort to those who have lost loved ones. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great

God of life, you are our resurrection. We remember all those who have died and trust that, in you, they will live again (*especially*). Breathe new life into our dry bones, that we, too, might live with you forever. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us pray together the pray we have been taught.

Our Father, who art in heaven hallowed by 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. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

The Sending

And now receive our Lord's Blessing.

May you know the Holy Light of Life in this time when there are more questions than answers. In the name of the God, + Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Go in peace.