

Sunday, February 21 (First Sunday in Lent) Day 5

**"Tree of Life and Awesome Mystery"
(ELW 334, Verse 1)**

**Tree of Life and awesome
myst'ry, In your death we
are reborn Though you die
in all of hist'ry, Still you rise
with ev'ry morn,
Still you rise with ev'ry morn.**

Discussion

Jesus' death happened thousands of years ago in a culture and time different from our own. His death and resurrection are events we can put on the calendar, albeit with some open questions. And yet, the cross and resurrection remain at the center of Christian life today, not only as

memories to be recalled but also as ongoing theological and imaginative spaces where Jesus gathers his people. On the bottom panel of Lucas Cranach's famous altarpiece in Wittenberg, Germany, Martin Luther preaches from the Bible while pointing to Jesus, who hangs from the cross, partially wrapped in a dynamic, white robe. Death and resurrection are on full display. For those who worship, Jesus' crucified and resurrected body is the object of their gaze and the focus of their faith. In this time of Lent, we are summoned to the tree of life. There we will find not only his death and resurrection but also our own.

Today's Prayer

Holy Spirit, gather us around the cross, where we can see and ponder Christ's work on the cross. Help us see that this gift belongs not only to us but also to the entire world. Amen.

Image: Dave Riethmiller - This is a permanent display in my guest bedroom that turns on along with the main light - the symbolism goes something like, "for all the interesting or comical things going on in the world, the empty cross oversees them all." (*following page*)

Awesome Mystery



I thank you, O dear heavenly
Father, through Jesus Christ,
your dear son, that you have
mercifully kept me this day,
and I pray that you would
protect me all my time when
I have some wrong, and
mercifully keep me this night.
Give into your hands I
commend myself, my body,
my soul, and all that is mine.
Let your holy angels have
charge over me, that the evil
one may have no power over
me. Amen.