

**Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,**  
**ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY**  
26 March 2023 - Fifth Sunday in Lent

**HYMNS:** 79 62 405 68

**INTROIT:** Psalm 130

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD. LORD, hear my voice!

Let Your ears be attentive to the sound of my pleas for mercy!

If You, LORD, should observe iniquities, O LORD, who would stand?

Nevertheless, with You there is forgiveness, so that You may be feared.

I have been waiting for the LORD. My soul has been waiting, and I have been putting my hope in His Word.

My soul waits for the LORD more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him there is very great redemption, and He Himself will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

**COLLECT:** Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people, that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**READINGS:**

Ezekiel 37:1-14 I shall put My Spirit in you and you will live.

Romans 8:1-11 Free from death through the Spirit.

John 11:1-53 Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.

*Welcome to all worshipping with us today!*

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***Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.***

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**

<sup>1</sup> The hand of the LORD came on me. He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and put me down in the middle of the valley. It was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He kept leading me past them and all around them. I saw very many of them on the surface of the valley and saw

that they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> Then He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones return to life?”

I answered, “Lord GOD, You Yourself know.”

<sup>4</sup> Then He told me: “Prophecy over these bones and tell them, ‘Dry bones, listen to the Word of the LORD!’ <sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord GOD has said to these bones: “Look! I shall cause breath to enter you, and you will live. <sup>6</sup> I shall put tendons on you, make flesh come on you and cover you with skin. I shall put breath in you, and you will return to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.””

<sup>7</sup> So, I kept prophesying as I had been commanded. While I was prophesying, there was a noise and suddenly a rattling sound, and the bones came closer together, one bone attaching itself to another. <sup>8</sup> While I kept looking, I saw that there were tendons on them, flesh grew on them, and skin covered them over. However, there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup> Then He told me: “Prophecy to the breath! Prophecy, son of man, and tell the breath, ‘This is what the Lord GOD has said: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain people, that they may return to life.””

<sup>10</sup> So, I kept prophesying, as He had commanded me, and breath entered them. They returned to life and stood up on their feet, an exceedingly large army.

<sup>11</sup> Then He told me: “Son of man, these bones are the whole family of Israel. Look! They are saying, ‘Our bones are dry, and our hope is being lost. We have been completely cut off.’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore, prophesy and tell them, ‘This is what the Lord GOD has said: “Look, My people! I shall open your graves and bring you up out of your graves. I shall bring you to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> Then, My people, you will know that I am the LORD when I open your graves and bring you up out of your graves. <sup>14</sup> I shall put My Spirit in you; you will live, and I shall settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I have spoken and shall carry it out,” declares the LORD.””

### **Romans 8:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup> For the principle of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the principle of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the Law could not do, because it was weak through the sinful human nature, God has done, by sending His own Son to be like sinful human nature, to be a sin-offering. He has condemned sin in human nature, <sup>4</sup> that the just Requirements of the Law may be fulfilled in us, who do not live according to the sinful human nature but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who live according to the sinful nature set their minds on the things that belong to the sinful nature, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things that belong to the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For the way of thinking that belongs to the sinful nature is death, but the way of thinking that belongs to the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> This is so, because the way of thinking that belongs to the sinful nature is hostile to God. For it is not subordinate to God’s Law. For indeed it cannot be. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the sinful nature cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the sinful nature but in the Spirit, if God’s Spirit dwells in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ; <sup>10</sup> but, if Christ is in you, your bodies are dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is dwelling in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who dwells in you.

**John 11:1-53**

<sup>1</sup> A man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped His feet with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was sick. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, his sisters sent someone to tell Jesus, “Lord, look! The one whom You love is sick.”

<sup>4</sup> When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness will not end in death but is for the sake of the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus loved Martha, her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> Yet, when He heard that Lazarus was sick, He stayed in the place where He was for two more days. <sup>7</sup> After that, He told His disciples, “Let us go to Judea again!”

<sup>8</sup> The disciples said to Him, “Rabbi, recently the Jews were trying to stone You. So, are You going back there?”

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours in a day? If anyone walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> However, if anyone walks during the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.”

<sup>11</sup> After He said this, He told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going that I may wake him up.”

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, His disciples said to Him, “Lord, if he has gone asleep, he will be restored to health.”

<sup>13</sup> However, Jesus had meant that he was dead, but His disciples thought He meant that Lazarus was taking rest in sleep. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, Jesus then told them plainly, “Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. However, let us go to him!”

<sup>16</sup> Therefore, Thomas, who was called “The Twin,” said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him!”

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

<sup>18</sup> Bethany was near Jerusalem, about three kilometres away. <sup>19</sup> Many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. <sup>20</sup> Therefore, when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him, while Mary kept sitting in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha told Jesus, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> However, even now I know that God will give You whatever You ask from God.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup> Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”

<sup>25</sup> Jesus told her, “I am the Resurrection and the Life. The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in Me will assuredly never die. Do you believe this?”

<sup>27</sup> She told Him, “Yes, Lord, I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”

<sup>28</sup> After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary. She told her in private, “The Teacher is here and is asking for you.”

<sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to Him. <sup>30</sup> Jesus had not yet come into the village but was still at the place where Martha had met Him. <sup>31</sup> Then the Jews who had been in the house with Mary and had been comforting her saw her get up quickly and leave. They followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb, to weep

there. <sup>32</sup> So, when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet. She said to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews weeping who had come with her, He was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled.

<sup>34</sup> He asked, “Where have you laid him?”

They said to Him, “Lord, come and see!”

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> Therefore, the Jews said, “See how He loved him!”

<sup>37</sup> However, some of them asked, “Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind man, also have kept this man from dying?”

<sup>38</sup> Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone had been laid against it. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Move the stone away!”

Martha, the dead man’s sister, told Him, “Lord, he smells already. He has been dead for four days.”

<sup>40</sup> Jesus asked her, “Did I not tell you, ‘If you believe, you will see the glory of God?’”

<sup>41</sup> So, they moved the stone away. Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. <sup>42</sup> I know that You always hear Me but have spoken because of the crowd that is standing around Me, that they may believe that You have sent Me.”

<sup>43</sup> After Jesus had said this, He called out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out here!”

<sup>44</sup> The man who had died came out, with his feet and hands tied up with bandages and with his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him go!”

<sup>45</sup> Therefore, many of the Jews who had come to Mary and who had seen what Jesus did began to believe in Him. <sup>46</sup> However, some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. <sup>47</sup> Therefore, the Chief Priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council. They asked, “What are we accomplishing? For this Man is performing many miraculous signs. <sup>48</sup> If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

<sup>49</sup> However, one of them, Caiaphas, who was the High Priest that year, told them, “You do not know anything <sup>50</sup> or consider that it is better for you that one Man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should be lost.”

<sup>51</sup> He did not say this on his own authority, but, as the High Priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not only for that nation but also that Jesus would gather God’s scattered children together and make them one.

<sup>53</sup> From that day on they plotted to kill Him.

## **THE THREE THINGS JESUS SHOWS BY RAISING LAZARUS FROM THE DEAD**

### **Sermon for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, 2023**

#### **John 11:1-53**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before John 11:1-53

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

As we study our text today from John chapter 11, we see Jesus doing three things: He raises the dead, arouses faith, and rouses the opposition. Three things, and what He does, He does for us.

The most obvious thing Jesus does is to raise a dead man. Think about that. Jesus raises a dead man! Who has ever heard of such a thing? The man's name was Lazarus, a friend of Jesus and His disciples. We have also heard of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus. They lived in a town called Bethany, just outside Jerusalem. Jesus and the disciples often stayed there when they came to Jerusalem. Lazarus was sick and about to die, so they sent word to Jesus, "**Lord, look! The one whom You love is sick.**"

For some reason, Jesus doesn't go as soon as He hears of it. In fact, He purposely waits a couple of days. Why? "**This sickness will not end in death but is for the sake of the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.**" You see, this sickness would not lead to death because it would not end in death. Death would not be the end of the story. God will be glorified through this event. God's Son, *Jesus Himself*, will be glorified through it.

So now Lazarus has died. Jesus goes to Bethany, but by now, Lazarus has been dead for four days - no question about it. No one can dispute that he had really died. He was not just unconscious or something. The body is already starting to decay. **Martha says to Jesus, "Lord, he smells already."** Still, Jesus goes to the tomb and sees a large stone across the entrance. He says, "**Move the stone away!**" and calls out with a loud voice, "**Lazarus, come out here!**"

It's a good thing Jesus says Lazarus's name, or else maybe all the dead bodies in that graveyard would have come out! Such is the power of Jesus' Word. "**Lazarus, come out here!**" Jesus' Word does what it says, and so Lazarus does come out, looking a little like a mummy. "**The man who had died came out, with his feet and hands tied up with bandages and with his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"** Lazarus is alive; his flesh is restored. Life comes walking out of that tomb. Life that has been called forth by Jesus, the Son of God.

"**Lazarus, come out here!**" Jesus will say that again someday - only this time, with your name on it! And the names of all those who have died in the Lord, who have died in faith - Christ will raise their bodies from the dead on the last day. Christ will raise our dead bodies when He comes again. Take comfort in that! Rejoice in that! Death is not the end. These mortal bodies that we lay in the ground will be raised immortal, glorified, no longer subject to death, whole and restored, in an even better state than they ever were before. The raising of Lazarus signals this. It is a sign of the resurrection to come.

It is also a sign of Christ's own resurrection. He Himself would rise from the dead in just a short while. The stone would be rolled away, but not by human hands. The grave clothes would be left behind. Jesus Himself would rise from the dead, leading the way

for us from death into life. He is the firstfruits of the resurrection of the dead<sup>1</sup> - first, Jesus, and then all of us.

So the most obvious thing Jesus does in this chapter is to raise a man from the dead. In so doing, Jesus is telling us today that He will raise us from the dead, that He has power over death, and that His mighty Word speaks life into our lifeless bodies. **“Lazarus, come out here!”**

Jesus raises the dead. The second thing Jesus does is to arouse faith in Him.

Jesus says to Martha, **“I am the Resurrection and the Life. The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies,<sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in Me will assuredly never die. Do you believe this?”**

Jesus calls forth faith from Martha. Not that she didn't have it already. She did. She tells Jesus, **“I know that he (Lazarus) will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”** And that's true. That is Martha's faith in what God had promised, even in the Old Testament: the resurrection of the dead on the last day. Now Jesus leads her to see what's standing right in front of her, to make the connection between the resurrection on the last day and the One who is the resurrection. Jesus Himself is the Resurrection and the Life. “Mr Life” is right there. There is no need to wait till the last day. Jesus is going to do the job right now.

To see the connection between Jesus and the resurrection, between Jesus and life - that is what faith is all about. That is what Jesus is leading Martha, Mary, the disciples, and all the people who were there that day - and us, who are here on this day - that's what Jesus is leading us to see. That He, Jesus, is the Resurrection and the Life. Put your faith in Him, believe in Him, trust in Him, for He is the only One who can and will raise us on the last day and give life now in these days and for all the days to come, *even life everlasting*.

And notice that. The life that Jesus gives includes the resurrection of the dead and victory over death and the grave, but it also includes life *now*. Jesus weaves both of these together when He says, **“The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies”** - that's the resurrection from the dead - and then He adds, **“and everyone who lives and believes in Me will assuredly never die.”** That's life now! We have that everlasting life right now, we who believe in Christ. We will never die. Not the Big Death, Death with a capital “D,” which would separate us from God forever. No, that will never happen to us because we have eternal life *right now*. It started when we died and were buried with Christ in Holy Baptism and were raised to newness of life. And that life - which we are walking in right now - that life with Christ will never end. Jesus says, **“I am the Resurrection and the Life.”**

**“Do you believe this?”** Jesus asks Martha, and she answers, **“Yes, Lord, I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.”**

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20

So the question comes to us also: *“Do you believe this?”* By God’s grace, we, too, answer, *“Yes, Lord; I believe.”*

Jesus raises the dead. Jesus arouses faith. And the third thing Jesus does in this chapter is rouse the opposition.

That’s the undercurrent in this story, the rising tide of opposition to Jesus, and His enemies are being roused to action. This miraculous sign, done right outside Jerusalem, is the last straw. Jesus is a threat to their system, to the religious industry they had built up for themselves. He threatens their power, and they’ll have nothing more of it.

**Therefore, the Chief Priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council. They asked, “What are we accomplishing? For this Man is performing many miraculous signs. <sup>48</sup> If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”**

Caiaphas, the High Priest speaks up: **“You do not know anything <sup>50</sup> or consider that it is better for you that one Man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should be lost.”** What Caiaphas meant by that is that they would knock off Jesus and get rid of Him, rather than risk bringing down the wrath of the Roman army. But ironically, what Caiaphas was unwittingly, unintentionally prophesying was that Jesus would die as the Substitute for the sins of the nation - indeed, for the sins of the whole world. John writes, **“as the High Priest that year, (Caiaphas) prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not only for that nation but also that Jesus would gather God’s scattered children together and make them one.”** God compelled Caiaphas to utter more than he intended or knew. Like Balaam of old, he must speak what God put in his mouth.<sup>2</sup> What Caiaphas said, he meant as, “Let’s kill Jesus. Better Him than all of us.” Caiaphas meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.<sup>3</sup>

Did Jesus know that raising Lazarus would stir up such opposition? Of course He did. They had tried to stone Him the last time He was in Jerusalem. When Jesus got the news about Lazarus and said He was going to go there, His disciples objected, *“Rabbi, recently the Jews were trying to stone You. So, are You going back there?”* (John 11:8). Yes, Jesus would go there, knowing what lay in store for Him.

Jesus tells us today that He was willing to die for our salvation. He willingly and knowingly went into that buzzsaw of opposition and hatred known as the Jewish Sanhedrin. He would go to Jerusalem - He would go to the cross - for you. **“It is better for you that one Man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should be lost.”** Or, to put it more directly: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but have eternal life”* (John 3:16). Christ died for all us scattered children of God, to bring us together and make us

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<sup>2</sup> Numbers 23:12

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 50:20

one in Him. Jesus knew what He was doing when He roused up His opposition - He was setting in motion the events that would soon lead to His death.

You see, the sin-death connection had to be broken. As long as sin remained unpaid for and unforgiven, death would reign, the stone would remain, and weeping would have the final word. But how to deal with all the sin which causes all the death? It would take the death of the Son of God to pay for it all. That's what Christ had come to do, and it would take Him to the cross and His own tomb. But His death means the death of Death! The sin-death connection is broken! Sins forgiven, death vacated of its power! That is why Jesus would go to the cross. That's why He was willing to face the hatred and plotting of Caiaphas and company.

In the raising of Lazarus, Jesus did three things: First, He raised the dead by the power of his life-giving Word. **“Lazarus, come out here!”** Second, He aroused faith in those who witnessed this miraculous sign - in Martha, the disciples, and the others. **“I am the Resurrection and the Life. The person who believes in Me will live even if he dies, <sup>26</sup> and everyone who lives and believes in Me will assuredly never die. Do you believe this?”** And the third thing Jesus did was to rouse the opposition, knowing He would stir up hatred against Him that they would seek to kill Him. In the ironic words of the high priest's unintentional prophecy, **“It is better for you that one Man should die for the people, than that the whole nation should be lost.”**

So now take those three things Jesus did and apply them to what He is doing here today: First, Jesus assures us of the resurrection of the dead, for our loved ones who have died in the Lord and for us. Second, He calls us to faith in Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life. And third, by facing such hostile opposition, Jesus shows us the full extent of His love, that He would willingly go to the cross for our sake. Dear friends, all that Jesus does here in the raising of Lazarus, He does for us! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Almighty and ever-living King of all creation, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father, whom all the heavenly hosts praise and glorify, hear our prayer.

We thank You, heavenly Father, for Your limitless love in the gift of Christ Your Son, for the sacrifice of His life on the cross for us, for the promise of eternal life through His death and resurrection, and for the cleansing of our consciences from dead works by His obedience.

Increase our joy in Your rich blessings: the forgiveness of our sins, deliverance from death and the power of the devil, and the assurance of everlasting life, which Jesus' crucifixion have obtained for us.

We thank You that in Christ You have spoken to us the words of life. Inspire us to love and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Give us that faith that sees in Him the eternal Godhead, the everlasting I AM, the one who is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. Grant that we may always trust in His mercy, be faithful to His Word, and obey His commandments, and

honour Him by losing our lives for His sake and for the Gospel's, as He lost His life to gain us.

In mercy, cleanse and strengthen Your Church, that it may be saved from all weakness and failure, and be filled with power for holy service. Govern the nations on earth, that people everywhere may live in harmony with their fellowmen and serve one another's needs. Pour out Your grace on our homes and on all schools, that the young may be trained for a useful life on earth, and be made ready for the life to come. Bless all who work honestly with mind and hand to provide those things we need for this life. Give all people everywhere joy in doing their daily work, and grant that they may do it as those who are accountable to You.

Help us to use our abilities and possessions faithfully, for everything belongs to You. Forgive us for being selfish and for misusing our gifts. Comfort the suffering, the deprived, the burdened, and the aged. Be the help of the needy, the protector of the helpless, and the Saviour of all people. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Article: Are we Narrow-Minded and Cold?**

Are we narrow-minded and cold? Can we be described this way because we do not join non-Lutherans (including liberal, falsely so-called Lutherans) in worship and prayer, do not sit at the feet of their teachers for religious instruction, do not share Holy Communion with them?

Some people may say so, but that is a misunderstanding. Because their preachers encourage carelessness, members of other denominations find it very hard to understand why we are cautious in these areas.

We are not narrow-minded or cold. We do not have a closed-door policy. We welcome anyone to attend our worship services and our Bible studies, to hear and learn the Word of God with us. But out of obedience to God and love for people, we do insist on a confession of faith in clear Biblical truth before receiving someone into communicant membership or welcoming him as a guest at Communion. That is not at all unfriendly. It is genuine, Christian love and concern for the other's spiritual well-being. Is a doctor unfriendly because he asks about a person's physical health before he prescribes treatment? Is a teacher unfriendly because he asks about a person's previous education before he tries to teach him? Is a lawyer unfriendly because he asks about a person's legal status before he gives advice? Neither is a pastor or any Christian unfriendly when he asks about a person's spiritual condition. That is care, concern, and love. A willingness to help does no good if we cannot know when and where what help is needed.

We should be as friendly, warm, and sociable as possible in dealing with everyone, including Christians who deny some Biblical teachings. We may have very fine personal relationships with them.

But we do not join in worship with those who depart from Scripture. We do not put ourselves into the position of being taught by anyone who denies any part of what the Bible teaches. We do not commune with those who do not believe what Jesus says about the Sacrament.

That is not hatred but love - being concerned about the spiritual well-being of others. For

truth matters. The Word of God matters. We cannot treat departures from it lightly - because of the danger to souls for whom Christ died.

It is also a matter of obeying our Lord. He tells all Christians: "*Beware of false prophets!*" (Matthew 7:15). The Bible teaches that Christians are to be in agreement with one another - on the basis of what the Bible teaches, because the Bible is God's Word (see Romans 16:17 and 1 Corinthians 1:10).

So we are always willing to talk about spiritual matters with others - with the Bible open! But we cannot join with them unless any disagreements are settled first. No two groups of any kind can unite and work together unless they are doing the same work in the same way.

A Christian congregation exists for the purpose of glorifying God and proclaiming His Word for the salvation of people. Obviously we cannot achieve that purpose by working together with those who do not proclaim His Word purely but mix in human thoughts and teachings. We cannot do that any more than we could work together with those who deny the Word of God entirely.

More important than God's commands in this matter are God's promises. Our Lord says: "Therefore, Jesus said to those Jews who had become believers in Him, "*If you remain in My Word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free*" (John 8:31-32). We want to remain steadfastly with the pure Word of God because of the blessings and benefits God gives us through it: comfort, strength, motivation, the assurance of eternal life for Jesus' sake.

Others may accuse us of pride, saying that we think we are right and have a monopoly on truth. That is not the point at all. It is not in pride but in humility that we bow before the Word of God, accepting all that it teaches, even if it goes against our human reason. The Lord says: "*on him who is humble and broken in spirit and who trembles at My Word*" (Isaiah 66:2). It is God's Word, God's truth. We take no credit for it but give Him all the glory.

The reason some people mistakenly consider us proud is that they think Christian doctrine is simply a matter of human opinion, as if theology were mere human philosophy. If we did insist that we were always right about everything, that would be tremendous arrogance. We have trouble convincing others that we are not standing up for the correction of our conclusions and opinions. We are standing up for the clear truth of God's Word.

Any departure from the Word of God does lead to human thinking - to philosophy - in religion. And human thinking always leads away from the teaching and truth that we are saved only by and because of Jesus. Human teaching will always in some way tell us that we must save ourselves. The Bible always tells us in every way that we cannot save ourselves but that Christ has already paid the debt for our sin and earned forgiveness, life, and salvation for us by His life and death in our place.

As important as it is for our hearts to be focused on Jesus as our only Saviour, that is how important it is to remain only with His Word in all spiritual matters. And that is also how important it is for us - out of love and concern for others - to want to direct their thoughts about religion only to Jesus and to His Word.

What seems to worldly - minded people to be pride, hatred, and insistence on human opinion is really humility, love, and loyalty to the divine Word. Only in this way is the sweet,

clear Gospel sweetly and clearly proclaimed. We must not take credit for the humility, love, and loyalty any more than we take credit for the Word. It is all God's doing, and He deserves all the glory. The only pride here is on the part of those who do not accept God's Word.

### Children's Message:

How many of you know what this is in our picture? This is called a gavel. Have you ever seen one of these used? A gavel is used by a judge in a courtroom. Who knows what a judge does? A judge is someone who helps people decide between what is right and what is wrong.



A judge tries to figure out what the right decision is based on information people share. Judges have to listen well. They have to think hard, and they probably should be pretty good readers, able to read about laws and rules.

What do you think the judge says when he discovers someone has done something that's wrong? He takes his gavel, smacks it on a block and says, "Guilty!" What do you suppose happens to people when they're declared guilty? Maybe they have to pay a fine. Maybe they have to go to prison.

Well, God has Law too, and God judges when we break His Law. And we do break it. We are sinners, and because of our sin, we are guilty. The Bible tells us that those who sin will surely die. That's not good. Perhaps we can picture in our minds God as the judge who is about to take His gavel and smack it on a block 😞. But wait! Today, we're learning that Jesus did something really great to stop our "guilty verdict." Jesus said He'd be willing and even glad to take our place as the one who is guilty. The righteous judge, our heavenly Father, took His gavel and said, "Guilty" . . . but He said it to Jesus. He said Jesus was guilty - even though Jesus hadn't done anything wrong. That meant Jesus would die on the cross for all of our sins.

So then, what do you think God said to us? Because Jesus took God's judgment of guilty that we deserved, God says to us, "Not Guilty!" Our Second Reading today from Romans says, "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*" (8:1). That means there's no verdict of guilty against us who believe in Christ Jesus. Jesus has taken our guilt out of great love for us. So all who repent of our sins and believe in Him are forgiven and will go to heaven. *Thank You Jesus for taking the punishment of my sin so I am declared, "Not Guilty!" Amen.*

**WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

<b>29 March Mid-week LENTEN SERVICE</b>	<b>2 April, Sunday Palm Sunday</b>	<b>MAUNDY THURSDAY SERVICES</b>
7.30pm TMBA Vespers	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am MARBURG LR	Wednesday 5 April: LOWOOD 7.00pm HC  Thursday 6 April: OAKEY 7.30pm HC
<b>Wednesday, 29 March</b>		
HYMNS: 177 65 232 48 v.3		
<b>Sunday, 2 April</b>		
READINGS: Isaiah 50:4-9a;      Philippians 2:5-11;      John 12:12-19		
HYMNS: 733 86 53 (66 294) 11		
<b>Maundy Thursday</b>		
READINGS: Exodus 24:3-11;      Hebrews 9:11-22;      Matthew 26:17-30		
HYMNS: 51 295 71 286 291 84		

Saturday, 1 April, 10.00am. CoC/Sem meeting at Lowood. Elections will be held at this meeting. Please ensure a representative is present from each congregation.

Monday, 10 April, 10.00am. Parish Sunday School Picnic at Aubigny. Everyone is invited. Could each family please provide something for a shared lunch and/or dessert? Children, please take a colouring-in picture home with you today and enter it in the colouring-in competition on the day.

AGM Dates:

Parish - Sunday, 30 April, after the AELC Service to be held at Oakey.

Mid-week Lenten Bulletins and Sermons will be available on the website. Printed copies will also be available the following Sunday for those who cannot attend.