

**SERMON- LENT 5 (A)**

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Ezekiel 37:1-14

Romans 8:6-11

Psalm 130

**St. Timothy's (Herndon)**

**March 22, 2026**

**John 11:1-45**

**OPENING:**

Did you see it this week? A *meteor* streaked through the sky over Northeast Ohio; bursting into a ball of flames at some point. That reminded me of *this* story: The story goes that scientists discovered that a giant asteroid was heading towards planet Earth and would arrive with devastating effects at a particular town that *Monday*.

Three ministers in the town thus gathered at the local coffee shop to discuss what they were going to preach at their *final* Sunday service.

The first, a Presbyterian minister, said “I am going to preach on the predestination of the elect and the sovereignty of God—the hallmarks of our denomination.”

The second, a Baptist pastor, said “Well, likewise, I am going to preach on God’s judgement, the forgiveness of sins, and how we are all washed in Christ’s blood.”

The two then looked at the Episcopal priest in their midst, becollared and silent. The Episcopal priest paused and stared at his two colleagues..... and said..... “Well, in the light of this moment ..... I thought I might take a look at the Lectionary and see what the lessons are for this Sunday.”

**TIME:**

Our sense of time, our understanding of the calendar—the notion of seasons, Holy Days, the Sabbath—are an important part of living the Christian faith. We take comfort in them and in our Lectionary because it reminds us that we are in God’s time and not our own.

Sense of time is also crucial to our (again, OH SO VERY LONG) Gospel story. “If...., if..., if...” then Lazarus would have been okay.

Timing is oh so crucial in our lives as well, of course.

“If only... that car had been coming down to the highway at some other *time*.”

“If only... we could have detected the cancer diagnosis *sooner*.”

“If only... we had known poor \_\_\_\_\_ was suffering so much, we could have done something ahead of *time*.”

Now, in the Church we have something called *Ordinary Time*, the extended time period after Pentecost, when Sundays seem to go on and on, when people are on summer vacation and life slows down.

But... we seem to find ourselves, instead, in the most *extraordinary* of times,

At this moment, we don't really need a reminder that we are living in such *extraordinary* times,

but we might need a reminder that God still holds us in his hands.

During this ‘oh so not Ordinary Time’ we share Mary and Martha’s frustration at Jesus: “why don’t you hurry? Why don’t you fix this? Why not now?”

And so, we ask ourselves:

How do we make sense of our lives in the midst of war and division?

How do we listen and look for God amidst the noise and confusion of “now”?

There are no easy answers. So, maybe the priest from our story was right: what *does* the Lectionary have to say?

## **JESUS and LAZARUS**

Famously, our Gospel story shows Jesus’ full range of human emotions.

We get to see a Jesus who grieves, who weeps, who gets angry, who is “disturbed in spirit.”

Lazarus’ death brings out this terrific range of emotions in Jesus, as he tries to manage his own grief and the expectations placed on top of him.

Jesus also shows an almost preternatural calm, this peace that truly passes all understanding (annoyingly so from the perspective of Marth and Mary).

Jesus is like an EMT, I have seen this happen a few times, who by virtue of their training, they show up at an emergency and they.... Wait.

On the doorstep, in the driveway, they have a different understanding of time than

the frazzled folks dealing with the crisis up close. It's only after that pause, do they come in.

These extraordinary times have brought forth a similar range of emotions in us. As a country, we seem to be convulsing, we are outside of the normal patterns of life, our normal coping mechanisms have been disrupted. We are all struggling to handle these times.

Jesus teaches us the ability to operate in both times: in God's time, as he is not rushed in the situation in our story, because he can see the long arc of history and God's plan for salvation. Meanwhile, Jesus also lives in human time. He grieves, gets sad, gets mad. You can't put it any better than John does here in verse 35, famously the shortest verse in all of Scripture, "Jesus wept" in the King James Version.

### **HEARING and SEEING:**

A two-word description that sums it all up.

I wonder... how a short sentence might describe us, now as *we* respond in this moment in 2026?

One possible response, from recent history: I remember during COVID, when we were all first learning ZOOM, and Google Meet and Microsoft Teams and a remarkable moment would sometimes happens during these meetings, particularly the first time using them, as one was trying to get it set up.

Do you remember this? (It happens still today too for those of us less technologically inclined!) As people were appearing on the screen, you begin to see your friend or colleague's faces with their living room in the background and you hear their voice.

As people came online, and the video and audio starts to work; People shout out: "I can see you!" "I can hear you!"

"I can see you" "I can hear you."

It's kinda silly in retrospect, but as we were starved, 6 years ago, we were *dying* to see folks in real time, we would blurt those words out.

Maybe that's what Mary and Martha said as they saw Lazarus come out of the tomb.

“I can see you! I can hear you! Can you see me?”

“You are alive. You are one of us. You are still with us.”

## CALLING

Would “I can see you. I can hear you” be an accurate description of the words that we need during this time?

Another example from history, but still recent.

Those were the words that a President used famously a quarter century ago, in the midst of the pain and the rubble and the world crashing around us. In the wreckage of the World Trade Center, shouted from a bull horn:

“I can hear you. I can hear you.”<sup>1</sup>

Not to make too much of it, was that the last time that we felt together as a country, that we were all reading the same clock, feeling the same things, telling the same time?

In our gospel, Jesus shouts: “Lazarus, Come out.”

Here at St. Tim’s, I am thankful because so many of you echo that in the course of our everyday life together.

You say continuously to one another, to me, to those in our community, to those in dire need.

It could be the tagline for our Service Ministry, for “She Believes in Me” for our Social Justice Ministry, and on down the line.

## CONCLUSION

Jesus’ raising of Lazarus is a foreshadowing of Easter Morning, a Resuscitation that previews the Resurrection.

In this most extraordinary of times, as the meteors and asteroids crash around us, we are called to call each other out of our tombs. To check on each other, to unbind one another, with our love and care.

One way is to say: “I see you, I hear you.

You are my brother and you are my sister. I weep, I am greatly disturbed, I am troubled in spirit but I know you and I love you.

I can see you. I can hear you.” **AMEN**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/911/response/index.html>