

Sunday, March 22, 2026

Fifth Sunday in Lent

John 11:1-53

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

"Behold, they say,

'Our bones are dried up,

and our hope is lost;

we are indeed cut off.'" (Ezekiel 37:11b)

"Martha said to Jesus,

"Lord, if you had been here,

my brother would not have died." (John 11:21)

My friends,

Some things are too much.

Sorrows and troubles that outweigh our ability.

Griefs, guilts, and hurts that leave us bone-tired.

Bone-wearied.

In our Old Testament reading,

Israel is bone tired.

Their sin had killed them.

They are cut off from God's promised land.

The holy Temple lies in ruins.

Their strength is used up.

Their life is gone.

"For to set the mind on the flesh is death." (Romans 8:6.)

In our Gospel Reading, Mary and Martha are tired.

Their sorrow cuts to faith and bone.

And perhaps there is an edge of accusation in their words.

Lord, if you had been here,

my brother would not have died."

They had asked Jesus for help.

But *"when [Jesus] heard that Lazarus was ill,*

He stayed two days longer

in the place where He was." (John 11:6.)

Jesus waited

until it was too late.

Sometimes,
 when we pray,
 God doesn't show up until after it's too late.
 He shows up after the disaster has struck.
 He shows up after the death.
 He shows up after
*"Our bones are dried up,
 and our hope is lost."*

So what do you do
 when God waits until after it is too late?

I. Remember He Loves You

My friends,
 We remember
*"with the Lord there is steadfast love,
 and with Him there is plentiful redemption."*

When God waits until it's too late,
 we might doubt His love for us.
 But His love for you is always steadfast and true.
 And in this account,
 there is no lack of love.
 Three times we are told
 that Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters.
 His love for them is even the reason He waited.

"Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

So,
*when He heard that Lazarus was ill,
 He stayed two days longer
 in the place where He was." (John 11:5–6.)*
 That "so" is the Greek word for 'therefore.'
 Christ's love for
Martha, her sister, and Lazarus
 is the cause of the delay.
 Jesus waited **because** He loved them.

*"Now when Mary came
to where Jesus was and saw Him,
she fell at His feet,
saying to Him,
'Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died.'
When Jesus saw her weeping,
and the Jews
who had come with her
also weeping,
He was deeply moved
in His spirit
and greatly troubled.
And He said,
"Where have you laid him?"
They said to Him,
"Lord, come and see."*

Jesus wept.

*So the Jews said,
"See how He loved him!" (John 11:32–36.)*

Our Lord mourns with those who mourn.
He weeps with those who weep.
His love and concern are real.
Jesus wept.

Whatever has happened in your past,
know that God loves you.
Whatever is happening to you now,
know that God loves you.
Whatever will happen to you,
know that God loves you.

II. Remember that too Late Is Never Too Late for God.

My friends,
What do you do
when God waits until after it is too late?

In *The Fellowship of the Ring* movie,
Gandalf says,
"A wizard is never late,
nor is he early;
he arrives precisely when he means to."

Now, Jesus is certainly not a wizard.
Jesus is God the Son.
But there is a lesson there.

What do you do
when Jesus seems to arrive too late?
Remember that "too late"
is never "too late" for God.
It is never too late for Him to reveal His love.
Jesus waited because He loved Lazarus, Martha, and Mary.
He waited
so that their faith
would see the glory of God. (John 11:40)

When Jesus arrives at the tomb,
Lazarus has been dead for four days.
The stone is heavy.
The odour of death is real.
By every human measure, it is over.
Too late.

And yet Jesus says,
"Take away the stone."
He prays to the Father.
Christ cries out,
"Lazarus, come out."
And the dead man walks out alive.

Not even four days in the grave was too late for Jesus.
 Because Jesus is *the resurrection and the life*.

So what do we do

when God waits until it is too late?

What do we do when our strength is gone,
 when every resource is exhausted?

"We do not lose heart.

*Though our outer self is wasting away,
 our inner self is being renewed day by day.*

*For this light momentary affliction
 is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory
 beyond all comparison." (2 Corinthians 4:16–17).*

We fix our eyes

*on "Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,
 who for the joy that was set before Him
 endured the cross,
 despising the shame,
 and is seated at the right hand
 of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2).*

We fix our eyes on Jesus.

Because Jesus Himself entered our "too late."

Hebrews chapter five tells us

*that Jesus prayed "with loud cries and tears,
 to Him who was able to save Him from death,
 and He was heard
 because of His reverence." (Hebrews 5:7).*

But not before the cross.

Not before the cry,

*"My God, My God,
 why have You forsaken Me?"*

Not before He breathed His last.

Not before He was laid in the tomb.

God answered Him—

but only after it was "too late."

God saved Him from death **after** He died.

And in doing so,

He undid "too late" forever.

What looks like too late,

for God,

is the moment He reveals His glory—

at just the right time.

III. Remember that Life Comes from Jesus

My friends,

Whatever your "too late" is,

God will carry you through.

What do you do when God seems too late?

You do what Martha did.

*"So when Martha heard
that Jesus was coming,
she went and met Him."* (John 11:20)

You do what Mary did.

*"Now when Mary came
to where Jesus was and saw Him,
she fell at His feet."* (John 11:32)

You go to Jesus.

You trust Him.

You hear His promises.

You believe.

Martha said,

*"Lord, if You had been here,
my brother would not have died.
But **even now I know**
that whatever You ask from God,
God will give You."* (John 11:21–22)

She speaks honestly.
 She grieves.
 And still she trusts.

Jesus answers her:

*"I am the resurrection and the life.
 Whoever believes in Me,
 though he die,
 yet shall he live,
 and everyone
 who lives and believes in Me
 shall never die.
 Do you believe this?"*

She says,

"Yes, Lord; I believe." (John 11:25–27)

If it feels too late,
 listen to Jesus.
 When you are bone-weary,
 listen to Him.

Life does not come from within you.
 It does not come from your strength.
 It does not come from your bones.
 Life comes from **outside** you.
 Life comes from Jesus.
 Jesus is life.

Jesus enters our "too late" and gives life.

*"And you shall know
 that I am the Lord,
 when I open your graves,
 and raise you from your graves,
 O my people.
 And I will put My Spirit within you,
 and you shall live." (Ezekiel 37:13–14)*

Jesus speaks to dry bones.
He speaks to the dead.

*"An hour is coming,
and is now here,
when the dead will hear
the voice of the Son of God,
and those who hear
will live." (John 5:25)*

Jesus gives life now.
He gives strength for today.
He carries you through the "too late"
into God's right time.

He gives you His Spirit.

*"To set the mind on the flesh is death,
but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." (Romans 8:6)*
*"You...are...in the Spirit,
if the Spirit of God dwells in you.
...If Christ is in you...
the Spirit is life because of righteousness.
If the Spirit of Him
who raised Jesus from the dead
dwells in you,
He... will also give life
to your mortal bodies." (Romans 8:9–11)*

Even now,
He is giving you eternal life.

*

My friends,

What do you do
when God has waited too late?
Remember that He loves you.
Remember that 'too late'
is never too late for God.
Remember that life comes only from Jesus.
Remember that the life and power of resurrection operates in you.

And when Christ gives you life after it's too late,
others will see.
After you have been beaten down.
After you are bone tired.
After every worldly hope is lost and cut off.
Jesus will raise you in the life of faith.
And others will see and believe.
Just like those around Martha and Mary did.
The glory of the crucified and risen Christ
will be revealed in you.

And yes,
for the ultimate undoing of every 'too late',
you will have to wait.
You will wait
for *the resurrection on the last day*.
But in the meantime,
even now,
God gives you the Holy Spirit.
And even now,
God
*"who raised Christ Jesus from the dead
will also give life
to your mortal bodies
through His Spirit
who dwells in you."* (Romans 8:11)

If you have fallen
into great sin,
shame
or vice,
the Holy Spirit can resurrect you in forgiveness.

If you are in mourning and grief,
the Holy Spirit can raise you into new joy.

If you are facing more than you can bear,
the Holy Spirit will bear you.

*"O Israel, hope in the Lord!
For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with Him is plentiful redemption." (Psalm 130:7).*

For Jesus said,
*"I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me,
though he die,
yet shall he live." (John 11:25).*

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ
Jesus our Lord, amen.*