

## Sermon for Mid-week Lent 5

**Date:** March 18, 2026

**Location:** Zion – Colby, WI

**Old Testament:** Ezekiel 37:1–14

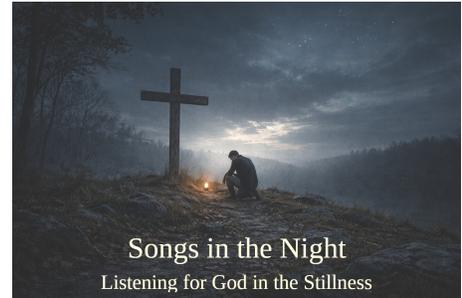
**Epistle Reading:** Romans 8:10–11

**Gospel Reading:** John 11:32–44

**Sermon Series:** Songs in the Night

**Sermon Title:** The Song of Restoration

**Sermon Text:** Ezekiel 37:1–14; Psalm 27



### Hymns:

LSB 452 – O Perfect Life of Love (v.1,5,6,7)

LSB 439 – O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken (v. 9)

LSB 422 – On My Heart Imprint Your Image

LSB 918 – Guide me, O Thou Great Redeemer

### Distribution:

LSB 436 – Go to Dark Gethsemane

LSB 437 – Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed

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316-Sermons by Phone:  
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*(No Internet or Smart Phone needed)*



**Text: Psalm 27**

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

<sup>2</sup>When evildoers assail me  
to eat up my flesh,  
my adversaries and foes,  
it is they who stumble and fall.

<sup>3</sup>Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war arise against me,  
yet I will be confident.

<sup>4</sup>One thing have I asked of the LORD,  
that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD  
and to inquire in his temple.

<sup>5</sup>For he will hide me in his shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;  
he will lift me high upon a rock.

<sup>6</sup>And now my head shall be lifted up  
above my enemies all around me,  
and I will offer in his tent

sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

<sup>7</sup>Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud;  
be gracious to me and answer me!

<sup>8</sup>You have said, "Seek my face."

My heart says to you,  
"Your face, LORD, do I seek."

<sup>9</sup>Hide not your face from me.  
Turn not your servant away in anger,  
O you who have been my help.

Cast me not off; forsake me not,  
O God of my salvation!

<sup>10</sup>For my father and my mother have forsaken  
me,  
but the LORD will take me in.

<sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, O LORD,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.

<sup>12</sup>Give me not up to the will of my adversaries;  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they breathe out violence.

<sup>13</sup>I believe that I shall look upon the goodness  
of the LORD  
in the land of the living!

<sup>14</sup>Wait for the LORD;  
be strong, and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the LORD!

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Grace and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Introduction – Remembering Where We Are in the Night

We are now a few weeks into Lent. The early urgency has slipped a bit. The resolve has maybe thinned. Some of the Lent resolutions have fallen by the wayside. The calendar still moves forward, but hearts might feel a little stuck. Earlier in this series we named those nights when God feels far away. We listened when silence lingered longer than we expected. Last week we sat with waiting that didn't resolve problems on our schedule.

Tonight the Scriptures are going to take us even deeper. Into the valley of death.<sup>1</sup> The question sounds simple, but it reaches places many sometimes find themselves. What happens when nothing feels alive anymore? When you've prayed. There's no answer, and you're spent.



### I. Brought to the Valley

The prophet Ezekiel doesn't wander into this scene by accident. He doesn't stumble across it while searching for answers. The Bible says:

*The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out.<sup>2</sup>*

God brings him to see what can be. Israel sits in exile. The Temple lies in ruins.<sup>3</sup> Songs have gone silent.<sup>4</sup> Hope feels misplaced. The Lord walks Ezekiel through a valley filled with death. God wants him to see it all carefully. To notice what kind of death this is.

These bones are not injured. They're not resting. They're not recently dead. Scripture uses a deliberate phrase. They are "*very dry.*"<sup>5</sup> This vision represents long lasting grief. This is exhaustion that has lasted too long. This is prayer spoken once, twice,... so often they've given up. This is the quiet admission of failure at hand.

*"Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost."<sup>6</sup>*

### II. The Honest Diagnosis

God does not correct Israel for saying this. He also doesn't call them out for exaggeration. He names their condition exactly as it is. God put them there for a reason. For the same reason a loving father corrects his son.<sup>7</sup> God asks Ezekiel:



*Can these bones live?*

The question presses beyond where human confidence ends. Ezekiel gives the only faithful answer one can give:

- 1 Psalm 23:4
- 2 Ezekiel 37:1
- 3 Kings 25:8-10
- 4 Psalm 137:4
- 5 Ezekiel 37:2
- 6 Ezekiel 37:11
- 7 Proverbs 3:11-12

O Lord GOD, You know.<sup>8</sup>

Ezekiel shows wisdom here. He doesn't guess. He puts the future where it belongs. We cannot revive ourselves. We can't restart faith by our own work. We can't even restore hope on our own.

When life feels empty, we search for substitutes: activity in place of repentance, noise in place of prayer, motion in place of trust. None of these bring real peace. They only mask it for a while.

Sometimes God permits His people to reach the end of themselves, so the work that follows is unmistakably His.

### III. The Word Spoken Into Death

The Lord does something unexpected. He doesn't command the bones. He commands preaching. He commands the Word be spoken and taught.



*Prophesy over these bones.*<sup>9</sup>

Ezekiel speaks to what would not hear. He proclaims promises where response is impossible... but then something happens. There is a sound. A rattling. Movement spreads across the valley. Bone finds bone. Structure returns. Bodies take shape.



God speaks first. Life doesn't begin with breath. Life begins with the Word. The Word says:

*Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*<sup>10</sup>

The Word is spoken, but the valley is not yet alive. Bodies stand assembled, yet motionless, still lifeless. Aren't we like that sometimes? Isn't church like that sometimes. The Word is spoken. God's Sacred Gifts are given.<sup>11</sup> So often so many are not here to hear it, to receive it. To be given the gifts of forgiveness, salvation and eternal life. So many souls starved to proverbial "skin and bones."



That valley was full of death; those who rejected God's gifts and blessings. It looked beyond hope. It looked like no future could exist. It looked like the only thing left was to give up, lay down, and accept the inevitable end. Have you ever gotten close to that place in your faith-walk.

Lot's of people have. I've talked to plenty of people, for many years, who have been there. Some stay there. A member of that dead army. All the gifts of life available to them and they've given up and won't accept it. Not that they can't, but they won't. That army surrounds us. They walk the streets and sidewalks of Colby, while the gifts of life are right here, for them. Just like they are here, for you.

8 Ezekiel 37:3

9 Ezekiel 37:4

10 Romans 10:17

11 These things are called 'The Means of Grace' the means by which we receive God's grace.

Lent is about reflection, repentance, and restoration.

#### IV. Breath From God

The Lord speaks again.

*Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.<sup>12</sup>*

The breath of God enters lifeless bodies, and they live. This is interesting. The word for 'breath' and the word for 'spirit' are spelled the exact same way. God puts breath back into you.



Where does that happen? In Holy Baptism where your body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. God put life back into you. Where does that happen? In the Holy Supper where God feeds you on Jesus very real and present Body and Blood for forgiveness and eternal life. The gift of God, the Means of Grace, are right here, right now, in this place for you.



When you run out of breath for prayer, The Holy Spirit prays for you<sup>13</sup> in words beyond all human understanding. He is the One who guards your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.<sup>14</sup> Restoration always comes the same way. From God. By God. For God's people.

This is comfort for those who feel more empty than they have strength to endure. He can give life where there is none.

This promise is for you, and for your children, and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.<sup>15</sup>



This promise speaks forward as well.

*I will open your graves  
and raise you up.<sup>16</sup>*

That valley points to another silence. Another stillness. A tomb sealed by stone. Jesus enters death valley fully. He lied silent. He waited. Then the Word<sup>17</sup> defeated death.

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup>

12 Ezekiel 37:9

13 Romans 8:26-27

14 Philippians 4:7

15 Acts 2:39

16 Ezekiel 37:12

17 John 1:1-2

18 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

The song of restoration begins here. Here in God's Holy Word. Here in God's Holy Baptism. Here in God's Holy Supper. All for you. When you have no where else to go, go here, and learn to sing again. Here is where the Valley of Death turns into the Valley of Peace.

## Conclusion – Quiet Confidence in the Night

God restores what is dead. God raises praise where none is found. God finishes what He starts.

I am sure of this, He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.<sup>19</sup>

We're not there yet on our Journey through Lent, but there is a light breaking on the horizon. The night's future is starting to break. Our path leads onward, but now a song of hope has returned.

I believe that I shall look  
upon the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living!  
Wait for the Lord; be strong,  
and let your heart take courage;  
wait for the Lord!<sup>20</sup>

Amen.



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19 Philippians 1:6

20 Psalm 27:14