

Sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

Date: March 22, 2026

Location: Zion – Colby, WI

Old Testament: Ezekiel 37:1–14

Epistle Reading: Romans 8:1–11

Gospel Reading: John 11:1–53

Sermon Series: Hope in the Dark

Sermon Title: When It Feels Too Late

Sermon Text: Habakkuk 2:1-4



Hymns:

LSB 438 - A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth (v.1,3,4)

LSB 439 – O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken (v. 10)

LSB 955 – Let the Vineyards be Fruitful

LSB 917 - Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name We Raise (v.1,3,4)

Distribution:

LSB 707 – Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices

LSB 430 – My Song Is Love Unknown

LSB 686 – Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

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(No Internet or Smart Phone needed)



Text: Habakkuk 2:1-4

¹ I will take my stand at my watchpost
and station myself on the tower,
and look out to see what he will say to me,
and what I will answer concerning my complaint.

² And the LORD answered me:

“Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so he may run who reads it.

³ For still the vision awaits its appointed time;
it hastens to the end—it will not lie.
If it seems slow, wait for it;
it will surely come; it will not delay.

⁴ “Behold, his soul is puffed up; it is not upright within him,
but the righteous shall live by his faith.[

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Grace to you, and peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I. When Waiting Turns Into Loss

For some weeks now we have been standing with the prophet Habakkuk in the dark. We've heard his questions and cries to God. We felt the weight of waiting when God is silent. We have learned faith sometimes looks like standing watch while nothing seems to change.

There sometimes comes a moment when waiting shifts into something heavier. The clock keeps moving. The silence stretches on. Hope no longer feels delayed. It feels expired. Time to just give up. Give up on faith. Give up on hope. Give up on God.

II. Habakkuk and the Silence That Hurts

Habakkuk stations himself on the watchtower because he has nowhere else to go. God has spoken promises of redemption and restoration, and the world remains broken. Violence continues. Suffering goes on. Wars break out. Churches empty. Some of them close. Where is God?



We know what it's like to pray and still bury our dead, 'cuz it looks like God didn't show up. We know what it is like to trust God and still feel abandoned, 'cuz it looks like God didn't show up. Silence does more than just test patience. It can wound hope. Faith under that weight stops shouting. It waits. It aches. It wonders whether the answer, even if it comes, will arrive too late.

Habakkuk knows that moment. The prophet waits for justice, waits for God to act, and wonders whether God's answer will come too late, or at all. Times like that strain faith. That same strain stands at the heart of what we heard with Jesus today.

III. Jesus Arrives After Hope Is Gone

Jesus hears His friend is very ill. He's in trouble. Jesus waits two days before starting to walk to the town of Bethany where Lazarus lives. By the time He arrives, Lazarus has been in the tomb four days. The stone is sealed. The reality of death and the desert heat on a body has begun. Whatever hope remained is gone. He showed up too late.



Martha and Mary speak words that sound painful: We prayed. We called. "Lord, if You had been here..." Faith is still present, but it's wrapped in grief. Jesus does not correct their theology or give them plastic platitude of artificial comfort. He doesn't hurry them toward optimism. He weeps with them.

That's something too often missed, too often forgotten. God doesn't stand at a distance and watch us hurt and suffer from our loss. He enters right into it. On that day the Son of God stood before a grave and allowed death to break His heart. No matter what comes in life never forget that.



God may test your faith to grow it, or to show you a strength you didn't know you had. He may be getting you ready to help someone who will need to know you understand because you've already walked where they are going. Just like we know Jesus did for us.

IV. Dry Bones and Sealed Tombs



That vision given to Ezekiel sounds impossible. A valley filled with sun baked, bleached white, dry bones receives the Word of the Lord. What is dead beyond repair is commanded to live, and it does. That same Word now stands before Lazarus' tomb. The command to roll away the stone confronts human reason. We know how death works. We know when hope is ended and gone.

V. The Word That Gives Life



Death should know better than to mess with God. Jesus speaks and Lazarus comes out. God's word is spoken and dry bones stand alive. Not because death gave them up willingly. It is because Jesus the Holy Christ of God commanded it. God gets what God



wants.

Paul tells us in the book of Romans the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead already dwells in you. I want you to hear that. Especially those coming to the Lord's Table today. Who do you think you are to come to this table? From this table you will receive the very real Body and Blood of the one who beat Death down. Who are any of us to come near?



The answer is the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead already dwells in you. That is true because of your Holy Baptism where your body became a temple of the Holy Spirit. You don't walk up here alone. Jesus meets you here. The Holy Spirit is carried within you here. You leave here with your

heavenly Father's approval.



Come here remembering you mess up all the time. This Table is set to clean up messes. Come sorry for sin. Come in repentance and humility. A holy thing happens here. You are made holy and return to your seat better than you came.

When it feels too late know Jesus is still Lord. Time does not bind Him. Death does not defeat Him.

VI. Hymn Anchor – Confession at the Grave

We confess that truth with the verse from our Lenten hymn:

*Yet unrequited, Lord, I would not leave Thee;
I will renounce whate'er doth vex or grieve Thee
And quench with thoughts of Thee
and prayers most lowly All fires unholy.*

That's pretty cryptic English. There probably a few folks who don't really know what that means so how about:

*Though my love often falls short, Lord, I will not leave You.
I will turn away from whatever brings You sorrow.
With thoughts of You
and humble prayer,
I will quiet every sinful desire within me.*

That is how you come to this Table, no matter what is happening in life.

VII. Hope That Does Not Lie

Habakkuk is told that the vision will come and will not lie. The waiting when life is challenging can feel difficult, but God's promise stands. Lazarus steps out of the tomb. The One who calls him out will soon walk into death Himself. The silence will deepen. The night will grow darker, but the Word has already been spoken. He will be victorious.



God is never too late. He meets us where we are and speaks life. That is what Easter is about a shout of life and victory forever.

Next week we will take our next step on that journey.

Amen.



Proclaiming God's Word
Encouraging one another in faith
Witnessing to God's love
Serving all people



Join us: Sunday 9:00am
Wednesday 10:30am

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