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UNDEFEATED BY HOPELESSNESS

March 29, 2020

Our lives are changing, and we have no control. That leads to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Today we will see how God steps into those places in the lives of others. Hope is always undefeated when God is present among us.

BELLS AND WELCOME

OPENING HYMN 382, vv. 1, 2

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

**My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare to make no other claim,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.**

**When darkness veils his lovely face,
I rest on his unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.**

INVOCATION

M The grace of our Lord † Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.
C **And also with you.**

CONFESSION

M Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. The apostle Paul writes to the Romans: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*Romans 6:23*).

- C** Jesus gives us this comfort: **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die"** (*John 11:25*).
- M** Even though we have these powerful promises of God, we fall prey to fear, doubts, and overwhelming grief when death stares us in the face. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Fully aware of the gravity of our spiritual weakness and the eternal consequences of our sin, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.
- C** **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.
For faithless worrying and selfish pride,
For sins of habit and sins of choice,
For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,
You should cast me away from your presence forever.
O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.**
- M** Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant: I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** **Amen.**

LORD HAVE MERCY

- M** In peace, let us pray to the Lord.
For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.
- C** **Lord, have mercy.**
- M** For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.
- C** **Christ, have mercy.**
- M** For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.
- C** **Lord, have mercy.**
- M** Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.
- C** **Amen.**
- M** In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

His oath, his covenant and blood
Support me in the raging flood;
When ev'ry earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When he shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in him be found,
Clothed in his righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before his throne.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

- M God of all grace, you sent your Son Jesus to destroy the power of death and to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.
- C **Make us certain that because he lives, we too shall live.**
- M Comfort us with your promise that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from your love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We pray through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. He lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C **Amen.**

FIRST LESSON

Romans 8:11-19

Even in suffering, God's people are filled with hope as they cry out, "Abba, Father!"

¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of^[a] his Spirit who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought

about your adoption to sonship.^[b] And by him we cry, “Abba,^[c] Father.”¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 116

The Church praises the Lord who delivers her from death.

Refrain

I will walk in the pres-ence of the Lord,
in the land of the liv - ing.

Psalm tone

*

I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;*
he heard my cry for mercy.

Because he turned his ear to me,*
I will call on him as long as I live.

The LORD is gracious and righteous;*
when I was in great need, he saved me.

Refrain

For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death,*
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.

How can I repay the LORD*
for all his goodness to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation*
and call on the name of the LORD.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son*
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning,*
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Refrain

GOSPEL

John 11:17-27, 38-45

Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus

¹⁷ On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was less than two miles^[a] from Jerusalem, ¹⁹ and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

²³ Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

²⁴ Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead

³⁸ Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

⁴⁵Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

HYMN OF THE DAY 167

Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense

**Jesus Christ, my sure defense
And my Savior, now is living!
Knowing this, my confidence
Rests upon the hope he's giving,
Though the night of death be fraught
Still with many an anxious thought.**

**Jesus, my Redeemer, lives;
I, too, unto life shall waken.
Endless joy my Savior gives;
Shall my courage, then, be shaken?
Shall I fear, or could the head
Rise and leave his members dead?**

**No, too closely am I bound
Unto him by hope forever;
Faith's strong hand the rock has found,
Grasped it, and will leave it never.
Even death now cannot part
From its Lord the trusting heart.**

**I am flesh and must return
Unto dust, whence I am taken;
But by faith I now discern
That from death I shall awaken
With my Savior to abide
In his glory, at his side.**

**Glorified, I shall anew
With this flesh then be enshrouded;
In this body I shall view
God, my Lord, with eyes unclouded;
In this flesh I then shall see
Jesus Christ eternally.**

SERMON

Ezekiel 37:1-14
Pastor Peter Panitzke

The Valley of Dry Bones

37 The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?”

I said, “Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”

⁴Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!’ ⁵This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath^[a] enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’”

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

⁹Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

¹¹Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ ¹²Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’”

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M LORD God, breathe your Spirit into our hearts and lives that we might live with hope.

We place into your care all who are sick or hospitalized, those listed in our worship folder, and those known to us personally, those who are already diagnosed with COVID-19, and those who will be in the days ahead. We ask that you would spare their lives and grant them healing. Be with their families as they seek to comfort and care for them.

Comfort those who have lost loved ones. We pray especially for the families of Nancy Beyer and Eileen Schnell whom you called home to yourself in heaven. Give them faith to celebrate that Eileen and Nancy are now at home with you, Lord.

Provide for our daily needs and open our eyes to the needs of others. Use us, our abilities and our generosity, as part of the way you answer the prayers of those around us.

Give wisdom to our elected leaders, give peace of body and mind to our police officers, firefighters and paramedics who are called to help those who are sick. Protect our men and women in the armed services, and especially a son of our congregation and graduate of our grade school who is being deployed overseas this week. Provide our health care providers with the tools and the skills necessary to serve the sick in our nation and in our world.

Hear us as we bring to you our private petitions.

Time for silent prayer.

Finally, gracious LORD, thank you for being present among us. Give us confidence that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN 419, vv. 1, 2, 3, 6, 7

If God Himself Be For Me

**If God himself be for me, I may a host defy;
For when I pray, before me My foes, confounded, fly.
If Christ, my head and master, Befriend me from above,
What foe or what disaster Can drive me from his love?**

**This I believe, yea rather, Of this I make my boast,
That God is my dear Father, My friend who loves me most,
And that, whate'er betide me, My Savior is at hand
Through stormy seas to guide me And bring me safe to land.**

**I build on this foundation: That Jesus and his blood
Alone are my salvation, My true, eternal good.
Without him all that pleases Is valueless on earth;
The gifts I have from Jesus Alone have priceless worth.**

**No danger, thirst, or hunger, No pain or poverty,
No earthly tyrant's anger Shall ever vanquish me.
Though earth should break asunder, You are my Savior true;
No fire or sword or thunder Shall sever me from you.**

**My heart for joy is springing And can no more be sad,
'Tis full of joy and singing, Sees only sunshine glad.
The sun that cheers my spirit Is Jesus Christ, my King;
The heav'n I shall inherit Makes me rejoice and sing.**

CLOSING PRAYER

M Dear Father in heaven, with your gift of a Savior you restored hope for our fallen world and brought glory to your name. We thank you for the good news that you have reconciled the world to yourself through your Son.

C **But this good news is not for us alone. In this climate of social isolation, move us to connect with family, friends, and neighbors through the means available to us proclaiming your peace that surpasses all understanding.**

M Through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen.**

BLESSING

M The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and † give you peace.

C **Amen.**

PRAYERS REQUESTED

Please pray for the following individuals in their time of need: Carol Beyer, David Burkowitz, Steve Drobka, Carol Gosseck, Janelle Gray, Lois Guhr, Connie Hikade, Josh Nagel, Judy Schmidt, Jeanne Steinbrecher, Dick Sternberg, and Al Wolfsohn.

HOSPITALIZED

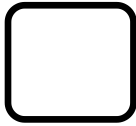
Fred Liermann is at Autumn Leaves Hospice, Dorrette Probst is in home hospice care, Bev Scharf has transferred to Clement Manor, and Marlene Sobczak is at Linden Grove Mukwonago. Randy Martin has been discharged from the hospital.

FUNERAL

Eileen Schnell, born March 24, 1930, went home to heaven with her Savior on March 25, 2020. Eileen will be laid to rest in a private ceremony at Valhalla Cemetery in Milwaukee on March 31 at 1:00 pm. A memorial service will be held at St. Paul's at a future date.

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NoteSheet

Sermon Outline

Take notes during the sermon to help you remember the main points

Undefeated by Hopelessness Ezekiel 37:1-14

I. Hopelessness reigns when the Glory of the LORD departs.

- a. A ministry ignored.
“The house of Israel is not willing to listen to you because they are not willing to listen to me, for the whole house of Israel is hardened and obstinate” (Ezekiel 3:3).
- b. The Glory departs.
“The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it” (Ezekiel 11:23, but read Ezekiel 8 – 11 for context).
- c. The city destroyed.
“In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month on the fifth day, a man who had escaped Jerusalem came to me and said, ‘The city has fallen’” (Ezekiel 33:21).

2. Hopefulness reigns when the Spirit of the LORD breathes life into us.

- a. “Our hope is gone” (Ezekiel 37:11).
- b. “Can these bones live?” (Ezekiel 37:3)
- c. “Prophecy to these bones” (Ezekiel 37:4).
- d. Open graves of the past and the future!
 - 1) Egypt
 - 2) Babylon
 - 3) Lazarus (John 11 – Gospel Lesson)
 - 4) Easter
 - 5) Ours

My Next Steps to an Undefeated Life

- **See the world from the LORD’s perspective:** Read Ezekiel 8-11, a vision in which the LORD reveals the sins that he sees and the removal of his saving presence. A powerful call to repentance to each of us.
- **Let the Spirit of the LORD breathe life into you:** Make a commitment to begin reading the Bible daily. Join our Journey to the Empty Tomb. Here is the link to the reading guide.

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