

Sermon for March 15, 2026, Fourth Sunday in Lent

Texts: Ezekiel 37:1-7; 12; Romans 8:6-8; John 11:1-2; 16-17; 39-45.

Title: "When the Voice of Jesus Calls the Dead to Life"

Introduction:

The Fourth Sunday in Lent brings us close to the cross and prepares us for Easter. In the Gospel of John, we encounter one of Jesus' most powerful signs, the raising of Lazarus. This event is more than a miracle; it reveals who Jesus truly is. John chapter 11 shows us grief, courage, and hope. We see the deep love between Jesus and the siblings Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and we see Jesus returning to Judea even though danger and death awaited Him there.

At Lazarus' tomb, the voice of Christ calls a dead man back to life. This moment echoes the vision of Ezekiel, where God speaks to a valley of dry bones and brings life to what seemed hopeless. The message is the same: **when God speaks, life begins again.** From this story, we learn three important lessons.

First: Love Moves Jesus Toward Our Pain

This story begins with a relationship. Lazarus was not a stranger to Jesus. The Gospel tells us that Jesus had a close bond with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, and their home in Bethany was a place where He often stayed. Yet returning there was dangerous. The disciples reminded Jesus that leaders in Judea had already tried to stone Him, and going back could cost Him His life.

At that moment **Thomas** spoke up. Though later remembered for doubting Jesus' resurrection, here he shows determination: **"Let us also go, that we may die with him."** He understood the risk yet chose to follow. His words remind us that discipleship can carry a cost and faith sometimes means walking with Christ even toward danger.

When Jesus arrived, He found Martha and Mary overwhelmed with grief. Standing before the tomb, Jesus did not remain distant. The Gospel says simply, **"Jesus wept."** In those tears we see that Christ enters fully into human sorrow. He does not stand apart from our suffering, but He shares it with us.

Second: God's Power Begins Where Human Hope Ends

When Jesus asked them to roll away the stone, Martha hesitated. She said, **"Lord, by this time there is a bad odor."** Lazarus had been dead for four days. From Martha's perspective, it was simply too late.

How often do we feel the same way? Sometimes situations appear too broken, too lost, or too far gone, i.e., a relationship beyond healing, a life burdened by guilt, or a dream that seems completely dead. Martha believed Jesus could have helped earlier, but she struggled to imagine what He could do now.

But this is exactly where God's power begins, where human hope ends. The prophet Ezekiel saw this truth in his vision of the valley of dry bones.

The valley was filled with scattered bones, lifeless and hopeless. Yet when God spoke, the bones came together, flesh formed, breath entered them, and life returned. And the same power stood at Lazarus' tomb. Jesus reminded Martha, **"Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"** And soon the voice of Christ would call Lazarus out of death itself.

Therefore, the lesson for us is clear: **faith means trusting in God's almightiness, believing that when God speaks, even what seems dead can live again.**

Third Lesson: The Voice of Jesus Brings New Life

After the stone was removed, silence surrounded the tomb. Then Jesus prayed and cried out with a commanding voice, **"Lazarus, come out!"** At that moment the unthinkable happened: The man who had been dead for four days came out of the tomb, still wrapped in burial cloths. Jesus did not enter the grave or touch the body. **He simply spoke, and His voice carried life.** The same divine voice that once called creation into being now called a dead man back to life.

Jesus then said, **"Unbind him, and let him go."** Lazarus was alive, but he still needed to be freed from the grave clothes. In the same way, when Christ brings new life, the community of faith helps remove the things that bind people—fear, guilt, and despair. So, the lesson is clear: the voice of Jesus has power over death itself. When we trust Him and live by His Spirit, new life and true freedom begin.

Conclusion

As we move closer to Easter, the raising of Lazarus points us to something even greater: The resurrection of Jesus Himself. At Lazarus' tomb, Jesus called a dead man out of the grave. Soon afterward, Jesus Himself would be laid in a tomb, but on the third day God's power would overcome death again.

The valley of dry bones reminds us that God can restore what seems completely lost, and the miracle at Bethany shows that Jesus has authority even over the grave. The message for us is clear: **no situation is too far gone for the voice of Christ, and no life is beyond the power of God.** The same Jesus who stood at Lazarus' tomb still speaks today—and when His voice calls, new life begins. Amen.