

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Fifth Sunday in Lent – March 22, 2026

***“²⁵Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?’”***

- John 11:25-26 -

When Martin Luther's daughter Magdalena was fourteen years old, she had become very ill. As she laid on her bed, her time on earth was coming to a close. Luther prayed, “O God, I love her so. But nevertheless, thy will be done.” He turned to his daughter and said, “Magdalena, would you rather be with me, or would you rather go and be with your Father in heaven?” The girl replied, “Father, as God wills.” Luther held her in his arms as she passed away, and as they laid her to rest, he said, “Oh my dear Magdalenachen, you will rise and shine like the stars in the sun. How strange to be so sorrowful, and yet to know that all is at peace, that all is well.” It is this hope in the hour of death which the resurrection brings before us.

Anyone who has lost a loved one knows the sting of death. Death strives to suffocate us, and it seems to be lurking around every corner. We turn on the news and hear about death everyday: school shootings, fatal car accidents, conflicts and wars around the world, Christians persecuted in Nigeria, illness and cancer. With each news report, life appears to more and more fragile. It seems we are bound, and there is no escape.

Yet, we think we can somehow cheat death. We’re convinced to try the latest supplements that promise to slow down aging. Serums and night creams are flying off the shelves as people strive to keep their fine lines and age spots at bay. Sadly, we can become so obsessed with avoiding death that we miss out on living the earthly life God has given us. Without God, we are bound by death, and we cannot free ourselves.

Lazarus died. His loved ones felt the pain of grief, including Jesus. Death cannot be avoided. But the good news is that God is *not* bound by death. God does his greatest work in death. Jesus is triumphant over death, and the raising of Lazarus foreshadows what is to come in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Death does not destroy us. It certainly takes its toll on us, that’s true. But it is in facing death that we have hope. With death there is resurrection. St. Paul reminds us, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4). We have life in Christ Jesus our Lord.