

# St. Paul's Herald

April 2026

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## LETTER FROM PASTOR

One of my favorite Bible stories is that of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus in John 11 (which was the gospel reading for the Fifth Sunday in Lent). I love the story because it shows the brokenness of the world due to sin, relatable human emotions (by all, including Jesus), and a tangible hope that comes from Jesus' words and actions.

Mary and Martha's worst fears had been realized. Their brother Lazarus got sick and even though they sent for Jesus to come, Lazarus died. I can't even imagine what that must have felt like. They knew their friend Jesus could help their brother through his illness, but instead death took him before Jesus showed up. It wasn't until after Lazarus was buried that Jesus finally arrived. Why did it happen this way and what did it mean coming from a supposed friend? Martha's response of "Lord, if you had been here my brother would not have died" (Jn. 11:21) to Jesus is completely understandable. Her worst fears had gotten the best of her.

Mary echoes the same response as Martha when she comes to Jesus. Jesus, however, doesn't jump to comfort her. Instead "[Jesus is] deeply moved in His spirit and greatly troubled" (v33) when He sees Mary and those with her weeping. After they tell Him to come and see where Lazarus has been laid, Jesus Himself weeps. Jesus does not do so out of fear, for He knew what He would soon do, but out of grief for the realities of death due to sin. In that moment, Jesus not only

sympathized with Mary [and Martha], but also experienced their fears and grief alongside them.

Jesus' response to Mary and Martha is different than at other times in His ministry. Jesus doesn't tell them not to be afraid or believe like He often said to His disciples. Instead, Jesus' words and actions demonstrate that He came to remove all fear and doubt. First, Jesus tells Martha, after she confesses that she believes in the idea of the resurrection, "I am the resurrection, and the life..." (v25) Then Jesus proves this statement to Martha, Mary, the disciples and all those watching by calling Lazarus out of the tomb from the dead, but not before grieving the curse of death with those present. Although the situation had not gone the way His friends wanted, Jesus showed

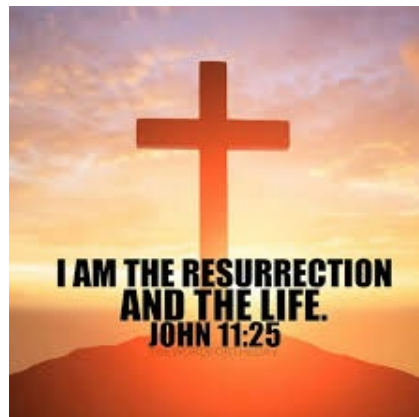
them that with Him there was nothing to fear because even death itself is no match for the Son of God. Jesus further proved this by His own resurrection on the third day.

Jesus' same words of hope for Martha are for you today; "I, [Jesus] am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he [or she] die, yet shall

he [or she] live" (v25). Jesus' same actions are for you also. He promises to come alongside you, like He did for Mary and Martha amid their grief and fear. Jesus also rose from the dead physically so that you too will one day rise again as well even though you may die. You need not fear anything including death itself because Jesus lives, the victory's won!

Happy Easter beloved in Christ,

Pastor Josh



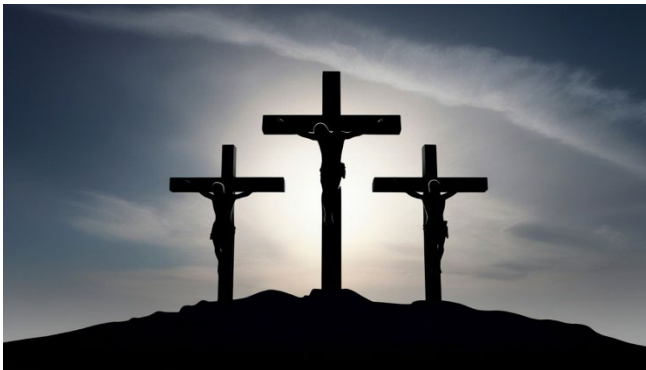
Checkout the words of the beautiful Easter hymn, *Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won* (LSB 490) on page 3

## CONNECTING TO GRACE



“What do you think of when you picture the idea of grace? Maybe it’s a nimble dancer, or a soft spoken but delightful family member. Maybe it’s a person or an organization that shows overwhelming generosity. Perhaps it is a picturesque landscape with a gentle stream, warm sunlight, and a slight breeze that carries the harmonious melody of the songbirds. These are all delightful images of grace, but they’re not necessarily the image of grace from a Biblical perspective. The best image of grace from the Bible looks a lot different from that which was just described.

Imagine a dusty Middle eastern countryside with rock formations nearby outside the major city of the territory for the time, Jerusalem. On a prominent hill, visible to all passersby heading for the city and temple,



stands three Roman devices of execution with a man on each painfully gasping. The man on the middle cross is different though. He is wearing a crown of thorns on his head and is shedding more blood than the men beside him. The people walking by pay little attention to the men on the outside crosses but have no problem hurling insults at the man on the middle cross. Even those standing watch nearby mock him for trusting God (see Mt. 27:41-43). Above the head of this one who called himself the Son of Man, “[is] put the charge against him, which [reads], ‘This is Jesus, The king of the Jews’

(Mt. 27:37)”. Darkness falls over the countryside for three hours as this Jesus hangs there, just as was foretold in the prophets (see Amos 8:9).

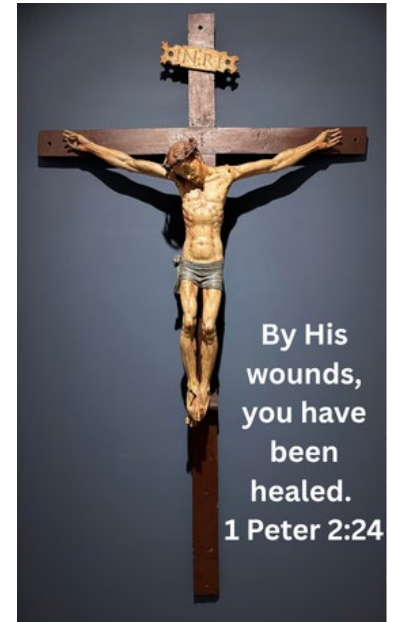
This image is what grace really looks like from a Biblical perspective. It is not polished and inviting, warm and comfortable, or pleasant and desirable. It is gruesome, horrific and frightening. If there was any scene in life that could be most R-rated for its graphic content it would be this one. But, this is the greatest picture of grace. It came not by avoiding suffering and death, but *through* suffering and death.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins taking the punishment for sin that we deserved so that we might

have His righteousness. “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed” 1 Peter 2:24 says.

Many people, even well-meaning Christians, are tempted to say suffering and

grace are like oil and water, they just do not mix. Jesus death on Calvary’s cross however illustrates that not only are suffering and grace connected, but that suffering is the vehicle by which God brings about His grace. First, in the suffering of His beloved Son, and then, amid the suffering of those He came to save. God did and does this because “[He] chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise [and] chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:27).” Suffering is the way which God’s grace comes to us. Praise God for the suffering of Jesus Christ the Crucified!



## 490 Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won

1 Jesus lives! The vict'ry's won!  
Death no longer can appall me;  
Jesus lives! Death's reign is done!  
From the grave will Christ recall me.  
Brighter scenes will then commence;  
This shall be my confidence.

2 Jesus lives! To Him the throne  
High above all things is given.  
I shall go where He is gone,  
Live and reign with Him in heaven.  
God is faithful; doubtings, hence!  
This shall be my confidence.

3 Jesus lives! For me He died,  
Hence will I, to Jesus living,  
Pure in heart and act abide,  
Praise to Him and glory giving.  
All I need God will dispense;  
This shall be my confidence.

4 Jesus lives! I know full well  
Nothing me from Him shall sever.  
Neither death nor pow'rs of hell  
Part me now from Christ forever.  
God will be my sure defense;  
This shall be my confidence.

5 Jesus lives! And now is death  
But the gate of life immortal;  
This shall calm my trembling breath  
When I pass its gloomy portal.  
Faith shall cry, as fails each sense:  
Jesus is my confidence!

Text: Public domain

### Easter Prayer

Lord Jesus, You took our illnesses and bore our diseases, bringing hope to the sick and the dying. In Your death on the cross, You completed Your work of bearing all our burdens and on the third day showed us in Your resurrected body the firstfruits of the new creation. Heal us now by Your Word and Sacraments, and raise us up on the Last Day that we might live with You forever; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

