

**March 22 Worship**  
**Reader- Brooke Bennett**

**Announcements/Joys**

**Time Of Quiet Meditation-** *“And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”* Mark 8:31

**Opening Scripture-** Psalm 130(page 538)

**Opening Chorus-** 294- Spirit Of The Living God

**Responsive Call To Worship-**

Leader: The Spirit of God has brought us here.

**People: The Lord has set us down here, though our bones are tired.**

Leader: Can these dry bones live?

**People: Yes! The Breath of God will revive us! The Word of God will awaken us!**

Leader: Today, we come together to experience new life.

**People: Let us give thanks to the Wild, Life-Giving Spirit of God!**

**Hymn of Praise-** 221- Lift High The Cross

**Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer-** God of all consolation and compassion, your Son comforted the grieving sisters, Martha and Mary; your breath alone brings life to dry bones and weary souls. Pour out your Spirit upon us, that we may face despair and death with the hope of resurrection and faith in the One who called Lazarus forth from the grave. We pray as our Savior taught us, saying....*Lord's Prayer...*

*“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”*

**Gloria Patri-** Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end.  
Amen, Amen.

**Old Testament Scripture-** Ezekiel 37:1-14(page 747)

## **Special Music-**

**Gospel Scripture-** John 11:17-27(page 935)

**Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace**

**Hymn-** 245- And Can It Be That I Should Gain

**New Testament Scripture-** Romans 8:6-11(page 982-983)

### **Message**

*“What Took You So Long?”*

When Jesus was told that his friend Lazarus was ill, he decided to wait a while before going to see him. Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, took issue with Jesus when he finally arrived only to find that Lazarus was dead. Martha confronted Jesus and told him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Martha assumed that Jesus had the power to make her brother's illness go away. While this may have been correct, Jesus had his reasons for delaying his trip. As harsh as it may sound, Jesus seems to have waited until death had taken his friend before showing up. Looking back in this gospel story, we find that Jesus knew about how ill Lazarus was. His sisters had sent word to Jesus expecting him to come running. We read in John 11:3-4; “So the sisters sent to him, saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. But when Jesus heard it, he said, this illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it.”

There was a plan for Jesus to show the power of faith through bringing Lazarus back from the dead. It was to show that he could overpower even death in this world. I wonder if Jesus understood Lazarus' point of view in all this? He was ill and going to die, Jesus was going to raise him from the dead just so he could go through it all again sometime in the future.

How many times in our lives do we put things off or procrastinate. We all know the old saying; Don't put off till tomorrow what you can do today.” Or as I like to say it; “Why do today what I can put off till sometime later.” There are those of us that are able to take putting it off to a new height. I am a true believer in thinking things through, I mean we can't rush into things you know. I understand something needs to be done, you don't have to remind me every 6 months. Having said this, I do realize that there are things that should be done right away and putting them off is, perhaps, not the best way.

How about our relationship with God? Do we keep saying that we will get

around to reading the Bible someday when we have more time? Perhaps we can spend a few more minutes in prayer when we get caught up with other things. We know that God is patient and will wait us out. What happens if we run out of time, something happens that stops us from doing what we know we need to? Yes, God is patient but time catches up with all of us and we all of a sudden discover the sands have run out in the hourglass of time. Step back and try to make time for what is important. This is not to say that there is just one thing that we must do to please God and there is no way that we can accomplish everything that we find in scripture that we are told is the “right thing to do.” The important part is recognizing what is right and trying, really trying, to get it done.

Humanly speaking, we can suppose many reasons for not responding to God till later in life, having a family or a career, wanting to travel, or pursuing any number of sporting or social activities. Some may think God won't mind waiting till their busy lives quiet down so they can spare Him some time. Others are too proud to acknowledge God. Some live comfortably by virtue of their own efforts, and they don't feel any need to turn to God. Some simply love their sin. And others are so convinced they are earning their salvation by good works they have not yet turned to God in faith. God calls to us, but sometimes we don't hear. God calls to us, but sometimes we ignore it. God calls to us, but sometimes our pride gets in the way. For some, it takes a personal tragedy before they stop to re-evaluate their lives. For others, it takes a lesson in humility before they acknowledge their need. For all those reasons and more, some people take a while to get around to turning to God.

Sometimes it seems as if it is the other way around. We go to God when we need something and then wonder why it takes so long for anything to change or get done. Of course, we usually don't ask God until we find ourselves in trouble. Building a relationship with God just to get our way is not the best way to get on His good side. But, when we ask God for help we may have to wait a bit for results. God works in His own good time and will respond when and if **HE** finds it necessary. God's plans and our desires do not always work out the way we want. We need to trust that God will see to our requests.

While we are waiting for God to answer our prayers and fulfill our wishes, do we understand that He may be waiting to? He is waiting for us to get our act together and do those things that are needed to have that relationship with Him where we may find ourselves living in a way that shows us we may not need to ask of Him what we can do for ourselves because we have learned some of the truths that He has given us in His Word. Of course, this requires that we spend some time getting to know what is in His Word and time asking God what His Word means. But I'm too busy and there is so much that I need to do and besides it is not easy to read, blah, blah, blah. We all have excuses for not doing things.

One of these days, we are going to discover that time is running out and that little bit of time we spent learning is time that we wish we had more of. Each week, as I write these sermons, I have come to the realization that I am looking in a mirror. Everything I write about makes me understand that all of us suffer from the same shortcomings and the same triumphs. Just like that Bluegrass song, "Everybody Wants To Go To Heaven, But Nobody Wants To Die," we all want something but we aren't willing to do what it takes to get it. I know what is supposed to be good for me but I always put off any action. I was told years ago that I should get more exercise and I agree. Maybe I'll start tomorrow. My diet could use some adjusting. Yeah, sure, but the holidays are coming or there's some other reason for eating what I shouldn't. I'll change when it's all over. OK, I've accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior, now it's time to accept the gift of the Holy Spirit. Well, maybe tomorrow, I know that the Spirit has some good advice for me but I'm not quite ready to change that much right now. If not now when?

What is taking me so long to fulfill what God is offering me? What am I afraid of? I know that God wants nothing but the best for me and I keep putting it off. All of us need to ask ourselves the same question as we prepare ourselves for Easter; why am I procrastinating over this gift that God has given me? I know that when I finally give in and when you finally give in and surrender to Jesus, He is going to say to us; What took you so long? Praise Be to God. Amen.

**Prayers of the People-** Gracious God, God of all compassion and consolation, your breath alone brings life to dry bones and weary souls. Pour out your Spirit upon us, that we may face despair and death with the hope of resurrection and faith through Christ, our Lord. Help us to dance with the spirit, the breath of life, which calls us out of the valley of dry bones and into the Kingdom of God, both a present reality and the grounding of our future hope. Holy Father, Father of Christ who revealed the way of life, inscribe your law on our hearts that in this life, we may be the body of Christ. Help our hands to hold the sick and suffering. Help our feet to walk with the poor. Help our ears to listen to those who live in despair. May our eyes be affixed upon the suffering of the cross and the hope of the empty tomb so that we may live as resurrection people. Sovereign Lord, Father of all in the power of the Spirit, you know our faults and yet you promise to forgive. Keep us in your presence and give us your wisdom. Open our hearts to gladness, call dry bones to dance, and restore to us the joy of your salvation. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## **Closing Hymn- 511- Lead Me Lord**

**Benediction-** Go into the world with assurance, hope and promise: the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon you, and even unsettle you; the love of God, creator and giver of life, embrace you, and even confront you; and the presence of the Holy Spirit encourage you, and surprise you, this day and all your days. Amen