

The Fifth Sunday in Lent March 26, 2023

It's hard to believe how differently people respond to Jesus. Some believe that He is the resurrection and the life and so are saved. Some reject Him and accuse Him of all kinds of evil. Like the High Priest and the Pharisees in today's Gospel Lesson, many people even fight against Jesus. May we never be numbered among those who fight against Jesus.

Glory Be to Jesus

Lutheran Service Book 433, Lutheran Worship 98, The Lutheran Hymnal 158



1 Glo - ry be to Je - sus, Who in bit - ter pains
2 Grace and life e - ter - nal In that blood I find;
3 Blest through end - less a - ges Be the pre - cious stream
4 A - bel's blood for ven - geance Plead - ed to the skies;



Poured for me the life - blood From His sa - cred veins!
Blest be His com - pas - sion, In - fi - nite - ly kind!
Which from end - less tor - ment Did the world re - deem!
But the blood of Je - sus For our par - don cries.

5 Oft as earth exulting
Wafts its praise on high,
Angel hosts rejoicing
Make their glad reply.

6 Lift we, then, our voices,
Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious blood!

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L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

L If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3-4*)

- L** Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:
- C** **God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.** (*Luke 18:13*)
- L** Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** **Amen.**

Introit Psalm 116:1–4, 8; antiphon Psalm 116:15

- L** Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.
- C** **I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.**
- L** Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- C** **The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.**
- L** Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!"
- C** **For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.**
- C** **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.**
- L** Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |

[Gloria in Excelsis is omitted during Lent.]

Collect of the Day

- L** Let us pray: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
- C** **Amen.**

Ezekiel 37:1–14

¹The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ²And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come

upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had 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 the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.’ ¹²Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Gradual Hebrews 12:2

L O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

C the founder and perfecter of our faith,

L who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

C and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Psalms 130

L ¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

C ²O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

L ³If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

C ⁴But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

L ⁵I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

C ⁶my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

L ⁷O Israel, hope in the LORD!

For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

C ⁸And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Romans 8:1–11

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead

because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: John 11:25

L I am the resurrection and the life.

C Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

John 11:17–53

L The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 11th chapter.

C Glory to You, O Lord.

¹⁷When Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. ¹⁸Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles off, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother. ²⁰So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, but Mary remained seated in the house. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” ²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” ²⁴Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” 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?” ²⁷She said to him, “Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.”

²⁸When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in private, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” ²⁹And when she heard it, she rose quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come into the village, but was still in the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When the Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary rise quickly and go out, they followed her, supposing that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³²Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” ³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. ³⁴And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” ³⁵Jesus wept. ³⁶So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” ³⁷But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man also have kept this man from dying?”

³⁸Then Jesus, deeply moved again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, by this time there will be an odor, for he has been dead four days.” ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” ⁴⁴The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, ⁴⁶but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Council and said, “What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. ⁴⁸If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” ⁴⁹But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. ⁵⁰Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.” ⁵¹He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that

Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵²and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. ⁵³So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise to You, O Christ.

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father

Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

My Song Is Love Unknown

Lutheran Service Book 430, Lutheran Worship 91, The Lutheran Hymnal n/a

Note: The melody is not in the Public Domain.

You may choose to sing "Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing" which follows as an alternative.

1 My song is love unknown,
My Savior's love to me,
Love to the loveless shown
That they might lovely be.
Oh, who am I
That for my sake
My Lord should take
Frail flesh and die?

2 He came from His blest throne
Salvation to bestow;
But men made strange, and none
The longed-for Christ would know.
But, oh, my friend,
My friend indeed,
Who at my need
His life did spend!

3 Sometimes they strew His way
And His sweet praises sing;
Resounding all the day
Hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!"
Is all their breath,
And for His death
They thirst and cry.

4 Why, what hath my Lord done?
What makes this rage and spite?
He made the lame to run,
He gave the blind their sight.
Sweet injuries!
Yet they at these
Themselves displease
And 'gainst Him rise.

5 They rise and needs will have
My dear Lord made away;
A murderer they save,
The Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful He
To suffering goes
That He His foes
From thence might free.

6 In life no house, no home
My Lord on earth might have;
In death no friendly tomb
But what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heav'n was His home
But mine the tomb
Wherein He lay.

7 Here might I stay and sing,
 No story so divine!
 Never was love, dear King,
 Never was grief like Thine.
 This is my friend,
 In whose sweet praise
 I all my days
 Could gladly spend!

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Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing

Lutheran Service Book 421, Lutheran Worship 95, The Lutheran Hymnal 144



1 Je - sus, grant that balm and heal - ing In Your ho - ly
 2 Should some lust or sharp temp - ta - tion Fas - ci - nate my
 3 If the world my heart en - tic - es With the broad and
 4 Ev - 'ry wound that pains or grieves me By Your wounds, Lord,



wounds I find, Ev - 'ry hour that I am feel - ing Pains of
 sin - ful mind, Draw me to Your cross and pas - sion, And new
 eas - y road, With se - duc - tive, sin - ful vi - ces, Let me
 is made whole; When I'm faint, Your cross re - vives me, Grant - ing



bod - y and of mind. Should some e - vil thought with - in
 cour - age I shall find. Or should Sa - tan press me hard,
 weigh the aw - ful load You were will - ing to en - dure.
 new life to my soul. Yes, Your com - fort ren - ders sweet



Tempt my treach-'rous heart to sin, Show the per - il, and from
 Let me then be on my guard, Say - ing, "Christ for me was
 Help me flee all thoughts im - pure And to mas - ter each temp -
 Ev - 'ry bit - ter cup I meet; For Your all - a - ton - ing



sin - ning Keep me from its first be - gin - ning.
wound - ed," That the tempt - er flee con - found - ed.
ta - tion, Calm in prayer and med - i - ta - tion.
pas - sion Has pro - cured my soul's sal - va - tion.

5 O my God, my rock and tower,
Grant that in Your death I trust,
Knowing death has lost its power
Since You crushed it in the dust.
Savior, let Your agony
Ever help and comfort me;
When I die be my protection,
Light and life and resurrection.

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Devotional thoughts:

A Thunder of Jets in an open sky, A streak of gray and cheerful "Hi"
A loop, a whirl, and a vertical climb and once again you know it's time for "ROCKY and his friends"
Staring that supersonic speedster, Rocket J. Squirrel with his pall Bullwinkle the Moose and a host of others.

"Hurry Bullwinkle the show's about to start."
"I'm coming as fast as I can."
"Wave to the people."

Thus began one of the most iconic television shows of my generation on November 19, 1959, when I was eight years old. It was on ABC, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons following American Bandstand at 4:30 p.m. Amazing as it sounds, it was the highest-rated daytime network program.

As much as I'd like to talk about the humor of Rocky and Bullwinkle, I'm actually thinking of a segment that aired much later in the show. Right after Bullwinkle tries to pull a rabbit out of a hat, Rocky exclaims, "Now here's something I hope you'll really like!" We were then treated to "Peabody's Improbable History" with a dog named Mr. Peabody and his boy, Sherman. Together they took amazing adventures through history with their Wayback Machine. (I might add, I wouldn't be surprised if Mr. Peabody and Sherman turned out to be the inspiration for Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure. Also, I might add that there is a website called Wayback Machine that has an archive of the internet.)

I want to begin with a Wayback Machine of our own. I'm not going to ask you if you remember things from 1959 or even 2009. However, I wonder if you remember the Gospel lesson from January 15th, The Second Sunday after Epiphany. I'll give you a moment. It was John 1:29-42.

Why do I want you to go way back to The Second Sunday after Epiphany? On that day, we heard the account of Jesus changing water into wine. John tells us that it was His first miracle. Since then, we, along with the disciples, have witnessed Jesus perform miracle after miracle. Last week, He gave sight to a man who was born blind. All of these miracles have proven that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

Today, we witness Jesus' final miracle before His suffering and death. More than any of the other miracles, this one proves that Jesus is the Son of God and our savior. It shows His compassion for those who are suffering. It strengthens the faith of His disciples and prepares them for the days that are soon to follow. It solidifies the opposition to Him. It provides comfort for us in the face of death and it gives glory to God.

The account begins with John 11:1. We learn that Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus is sick and they are seriously concerned about him. The Greek word for sick implies that he is very weak. I can imagine that he may

have been so ill that he couldn't get out of bed. Then his sisters sent word to Jesus, whose ministry overflowed with miraculous healings.

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law. Matthew tells us, "He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people" (Matthew 4:23). Surely He could be counted on to heal His dear friend.

But it wasn't to be. Jesus stayed where He was for two more days before He told His disciples, "Let us go to Judea again. Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him." The disciples didn't understand Jesus so they said, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." Jesus had to tell them plainly, "Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

[I'd like to share an important side note about Jesus' comment. To this day, it is common for Christians to refer to death as "falling asleep in the Lord." In fact, our word, cemetery, comes directly from the Greek word Jesus used in John 11:11. It literally means a "sleeping place" (κοιμητήριον). It is a place where, like Lazarus, our bodies wait for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.)

Jesus delayed his trip for the sake of His disciples. He wanted them to believe in the resurrection of the dead. The disciples were fully aware of the danger awaiting Jesus in Jerusalem. Thomas said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16).

When they arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days! Let me pause and offer another side note. There is a tomb in Bethany that has been recognized as Lazarus' tomb since at least the year 333. Archeologists have established that the area was used as a cemetery in the 1st century AD. Today, Bethany is called by an Arabic name that means the "[place] of Lazarus."

Now things get interesting. Mary and Martha must have had many friends. John tells us that many people came to comfort and console them at the death of their brother. Martha left the wake and quickly went to greet Jesus. Her encounter with Him has made an impact on Christians of every generation.

Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." (John 11:21-22). This is a great statement of faith. In response, Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." The resurrection from the dead is God's ultimate promise to us through faith in Jesus. Martha was a believer. She knew that her brother would rise again in the resurrection on the last day.

Jesus then spoke to her words that touch our hearts to this very day. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

I can imagine that Martha's heart swelled with joy hearing Jesus speak those words. She responded with this wonderful confession of faith, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." This is exactly what we believe today! This is exactly what Jesus wanted His disciples to believe.

Next, it's Mary's turn. She rose quickly and went to Jesus. Through her tears, she said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." Seeing her grief and the tears of all the mourners, John tells us that Jesus was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

It brings me great comfort to know that Jesus is sympathetic to our suffering and loss when a loved one dies. As they walked to the tomb, Jesus wept!

Have you ever heard someone say, "Christians shouldn't cry at funerals. They should be happy."? Of course, if Jesus could cry at Lazarus' grave then it is perfectly acceptable for us to cry at the death of a loved one. We were created for life. Death is the consequence of sin. Even though Jesus knew that He would raise Lazarus from the dead, He cried.

I'm not particularly fond of calling a funeral a "celebration of life." We may have happy memories of our loved ones. We may smile when we think of them but we can learn a lesson from Mary, Martha, and Jesus that it is okay to grieve. But as Christians, we grieve differently. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep" (Thessalonians 4:13-14).

We grieve but we know that Jesus will come on the last day and raise us and all believers.

When they got to the tomb, Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Then he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." And Lazarus came out of the tomb! He was alive but still wrapped with burial cloths. Indeed, Jesus is the resurrection and the life! Lazarus proved it!

Not everyone was happy. Caiaphas, the high priest with the rest of the council and the Pharisees plotted to put Jesus to death.

The disciples would soon be scattered. Peter would deny Jesus three times and weep bitterly. The crowds would yell, "Crucify Him." The women would witness Jesus' death and anoint Him for burial.

As they carried Jesus to the tomb, did they remember Lazarus? We don't know. They should have. So should we.

In less than two weeks, we will observe Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. But we know that on the other side, Easter awaits us. We know that the tomb will be empty. We will again hear the angel say, "He is not here, for He has risen, as He said" (Matthew 28:6).

As we walk through this vale of tears, as we suffer loss and mourn our loved ones, let us never forget Jesus' words to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

God's richest blessings to you in Christ.

On My Heart Imprint Your Image

Lutheran Service Book 422, Lutheran Worship 100, The Lutheran Hymnal 179



On my heart im - print Your im - age, Bless - ed Je - sus, King of grace,



That life's rich-es, cares, and plea-sures Nev - er may Your work e-rase;



Let the clear in - scrip-tion be: Je - sus, cru - ci - fied for me,



Is my life, my hope's foun - da - tion, And my glo - ry and sal - va - tion!

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Prayers

L Lord, You raised Your Son and sent Your Spirit. Sustain us during our present needs. Strengthen our faith, heal our weaknesses, and restore all our losses. Grant that we would fix our eyes on Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life.

C Amen.

L O Lord, God, breathe Your life into us, that we may stand by Your strength and live according to Your Word. Grant that Your Word would be faithfully proclaimed that it would bring life to the downtrodden, the faithless, the fearful and the outcast.

C Amen.

L Lord God, those who wait for Your salvation have Your promise that You will not forsake them. Lead those who wander in darkness through rough places that led by the Light of the world, they would find the way of righteousness and not be put to shame.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, remember our nation and its leaders. Bless all who make, administer and judge our laws, and enable us to be good and responsible citizens.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to protect and keep us in Your ways, that no evil may befall us. Graciously behold the needy, the sick and the troubled [especially _____]. Satisfy us with long life, and show us Your salvation.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

Lutheran Service Book 575, Lutheran Worship 368, The Lutheran Hymnal 370



1 My hope is built on noth - ing less Than Je - sus'
2 When dark - ness veils His love - ly face, I rest on
3 His oath, His cov - e - nant and blood Sup - port me
4 When He shall come with trum - pet sound, Oh, may I



blood and righ - teous - ness; No mer - it of my
His un - chang - ing grace; In ev - 'ry high and
in the rag - ing flood; When ev - 'ry earth - ly
then in Him be found, Clothed in His righ - teous -



own I claim But whol - ly lean on Je - sus' name.
storm - y gale My an - chor holds with - in the veil.
prop gives way, He then is all my hope and stay.
ness a - lone, Re - deemed to stand be - fore His throne!

Refrain



On Christ, the sol-id rock, I stand; All oth-er ground is sink-ing sand.

5 Oft as earth exulting
Wafts its praise on high,
Angel hosts rejoicing
Make their glad reply.

6 Lift we, then, our voices,
Swell the mighty flood;
Louder still and louder
Praise the precious blood!

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Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

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Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 27 – April 1, 2023

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you meditate on what God has done for you.

Monday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

Introit Psalm 116:1–4, 8; antiphon Psalm 116:15

- L** Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.
- C** I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.
- L** Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- C** The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
- L** Then I called on the name of the Lord:
"O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!"
- C** For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.
- C** 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.
- L** Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.

Verse of the Day: John 11:25

- L** I am the resurrection and the life.
- C** Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

Kyrie

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

One of the most moving scenes in the New Testament is recorded in Luke 7:36-50. It is the account of the women anointing Jesus' feet with ointment while He was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house. The Pharisee couldn't believe that Jesus would allow such a thing considering the woman's background.

Jesus knew what he was thinking and told him this parable. "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" The Pharisee answered as we all would, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." Jesus explained that this applied to the woman. He said, "I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little."

This scene came to mind as I read Psalm 116:1 from our introit this week. "I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy." Our love for God is always in response to His love and kindness to us. 1 John 4:10 says, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Any lack of love that we might display toward God is evidence that we don't fully recognize the love that He has for us in Christ. Not only has He given us our homes, families, and all that we need to support ourselves on our journey through life, He has forgiven us much.

Jesus' final words to the woman were "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." We must never forget that it is not our love for God that saves us but it is His love for us. We receive that salvation by faith!

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for hearing our prayers and granting us full forgiveness for Christ's sake. Move us truly to love you in all that we say and do through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Tuesday

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| L | In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. |
| C | Amen. |

Verse of the Day: John 11:25

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|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| L | I am the resurrection and the life. |
| C | Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. |

Kyrie

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|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

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| L | Let us pray: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. |
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C **Amen.**

Is your life more like floating down a lazy river or a raging rapids? When you are floating down a lazy river, you feel totally in control. When you are navigating raging rapids, you feel that things are about to fall apart. Most of the time, you are probably somewhere in between.

When I'm in the raging river of life, I am highly motivated to turn to God in prayer. When I find myself in

the calmer parts of the river, I'm more likely to neglect my prayer life.

The collect for this week reminds us that we always need God's goodness and mercy. We always need Him to govern and preserve us, in good times and in bad.

I remember hearing a fighter pilot tell how he was forced to bail out over North Vietnam. He recounted how he hadn't prayed in years until that moment. During his time in a North Vietnamese prison, his faith and prayer life blossomed.

Let us learn to be faithful in our prayers and worship life in good times and bad. God is faithful to us through every stage of life. He not only preserves us throughout the days of our lives but He has opened eternity for us through Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross.

Prayer: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Wednesday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 11:25

L I am the resurrection and the life.

C Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

Psalms 130

L ¹Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

C ²O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

L ³If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

C ⁴But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

L ⁵I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

C ⁶my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning,
more than watchmen for the morning.

L ⁷O Israel, hope in the LORD!

For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption.

C ⁸And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Psalms 130 is one of the psalms selected to be read at funerals. It's an appropriate psalm for the week when we witnessed Mary and Martha mourn the death of their brother, Lazarus.

It's interesting to note that they are still consumed with tears four days after Lazarus died and was buried. Grief is such a personal thing that it is hard for someone who is not experiencing it to fully understand. Asking God for relief at that time is indeed like crying to the Lord "out of the depths."

Thankfully, God is attentive to our pleas for mercy. He heard Mary and Martha. Although Jesus delayed, He came and answered their plea in the most amazing way.

Sometimes our grief is inconsolable. This is totally understandable. However, as time passes, God's word

of hope brings comfort to us as we wait for a blessed reunion in heaven with our loved ones who have gone before.

We can be certain of reaching the eternal mansions of heaven because with the Lord there is forgiveness for Jesus' sake. We who are left behind are called upon to wait.

Some have asked, "Why am I still here?" or "Why didn't the Lord take me instead?" While none of us can know that answer for sure, it is certain that God's will is always best. He still has important things for us to accomplish before He calls us home.

Until that time, "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning."

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for hearing our cries for mercy when we are in the depths of despair. Grant that we would wait patiently for the day when we will be reunited with all the believers who have gone before us to our eternal home in heaven through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 11:25

L I am the resurrection and the life.

C Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Ezekiel 37:1–14

¹The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ²And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." ⁴Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD."

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had 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 the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' ¹²Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from

your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

“Dem bones Dem bones Dem dry bones” is the beginning of a song written by James Weldon Johnson and his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson. It was first recorded by The Famous Myers Jubilee Singers in 1928. I’m pretty sure that I learned it as a child. It’s fun to sing “Toe bone connected to the foot bone,” etc.

It wasn’t until I was much older that I learned that this song was inspired by Ezekiel 37:1-14. The reference to “dry bones” in the first line should have tipped me off (Ezekiel 37:1-2). The last line of the verses and choruses, “Hear the word of the Lord” should have sealed the deal (Ezekiel 37:4). Finally, the second chorus “Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk around” is a reference to the resurrection. Unfortunately, one extremely important detail was left out of this little ditty. There is no reference to breath!

Bones and sinew and flesh can come together and look like a person but without breath, there is no life! When God created Adam (Genesis 2:7), His final act was to breathe “into his nostrils the breath of life.” Without breath, there is no life.

As we often are, the Children of Israel were a rebellious lot. It began during the Exodus in the wilderness and continued to their Exile in Babylon. Their rebellion turned them into dry bones, people who were spiritually dried up because they refused to “hear the word of the Lord.”

It is only through “the word of the Lord” that we can have life and spiritual breath. The Holy Spirit brings us life through the word of God. We often say that He works through the Means of Grace, the word and sacraments. However, careful examination of the sacraments reveals that it is His word that works in them, too.

About Holy Baptism, Luther asks in his Small Catechism:

How can water do such great things?

Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God’s word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three:

“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying.” [Titus 3:5-8]¹

Likewise, he says this about the Lord’s Supper:

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?

Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.” These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: “forgiveness of sins.”²

When we avoid God’s word and sacraments, we become dry bones! But do not despair. When we again return to the Lord and hear His word, the knee bone is again connected to the thigh bone and His breath comes into us and we live!

On the day that Jesus raised Lazarus, He did it with His word. Although Lazarus was dead, He was compelled by the word of the Lord to come out of his tomb when Jesus said, “Lazarus, come out.”

On the Last Day, we will also come out of our graves and be raised from the dead. God’s breath will return to our lifeless bodies and we will live forever with Jesus and all believers.

¹Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism With Explanation*, Contains the basic principles of the Lutheran religion with some explanation.; Translation of: Kleine Katechismus - English., electronic ed., 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997, c1986).

²Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism With Explanation*, Contains the basic principles of the Lutheran religion with some explanation.; Translation of: Kleine Katechismus - English., electronic ed., 3 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997, c1986).

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 tells us:

¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

Prayer: Lord God, thank You for Your life-giving Spirit. Grant that we would joyfully “Hear the word of the Lord” and live for time and for all eternity through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: John 11:25

L I am the resurrection and the life.

C Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Romans 8:1–11

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

It’s often hard for me to believe where God has led me in my life. I had a happy childhood and didn’t find out until much later how poor my parents were. Growing up, I never expected to fly in an airplane or travel to Europe.

Once on vacation in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, my mother suggested that we should cross into Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario for lunch because the kids might never have another chance to visit Canada! So you can imagine how amazing it was that a few years ago, I found myself with my daughter visiting the Prado (*Museo Nacional del Prado*) in Madrid, Spain.

I was blessed to prepare for the ministry at a time when the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod considered a liberal arts education to be essential for preparing for the ministry. It was felt that a wide-ranging education

would prepare our pastors to minister to people of all backgrounds and walks of life. As a result, I was exposed to many things that I would have never chosen to pursue on my own. One of them was an appreciation of fine art.

At Concordia Lutheran Junior College (now Concordia University) in Ann Arbor, I was privileged to take two courses titled Humanities I and II. We studied the world of art, architecture, fine music, etc. I learned that I enjoy all kinds of art from the Renaissance to Impressionism. (However, I must admit that I have yet to learn to appreciate statuary constructed by welding together random pieces of junkyard steel.)

As my daughter and I walked through the Prado, we were confronted by great works of art and treasures around every corner. We could have spent weeks there but we only could stay for one day. The Prado is so crammed full of masterpieces that I'm sure we missed many more than we saw.

The Book of Romans reminds me of the Prado. It is filled with so many treasures that it's hard to fully appreciate its richness. Romans 8 is a perfect example. Romans 8 is such a treasure house of wonderful verses that it is easy to miss some. Romans 8:28 is a favorite of many people, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." But it garners so much attention that we may miss verses 1 and 11.

Verse 1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Paul goes on to say in verse 11, "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." These verses are two great treasures in chapter 8.

The Christian faith is not about condemning people. It is about freeing people from condemnation.

Because of sin, all of humanity is under condemnation and separated from God. This not only applies to those who commit course and obvious sins. It also applies to everyone who falls short of the perfection required by God. This includes us all.

John 3:17 tells us, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Jesus did this for us by receiving the condemnation that we deserve by suffering and dying on the cross for us. Through faith in Him, we receive the gift of salvation.

Being freed from the condemnation of the Law, we are perfectly holy in God's eyes through Jesus Christ. As a result, we look forward to the day that we will share in His resurrection when God will give life to our mortal bodies. These are great treasures that no one should miss.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for sending your Son into the world to receive the condemnation that we deserve. Grant us true faith to receive the salvation that He won for us on the cross as we look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Saturday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Gradual Hebrews 12:2

L O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,

C the founder and perfecter of our faith,

L who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,

C and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Verse of the Day: John 11:25

L I am the resurrection and the life.

C Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.

Kyrie

L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.

Romans 8:1–11

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

A few weeks ago, I was treated to the sight of bluebirds at my feeder. This was a first for me. I have several bird feeders outside my kitchen window and delight in seeing woodpeckers, nut hatches, blue jays, etc. We also have many squirrels in our backyard. It's fun to see them running back and forth and jumping from branch to branch. I don't delight in seeing them on my bird feeders. I have employed a variety of methods to hinder them but eventually, they seem to figure out a way around all of my defensive measures.

Some are so bold that they come right to my window and are undeterred by my presence. They ignore tapping on the window. The only thing that seems to work is opening the window and shooing them away. Of course, I can't stand guard at my feeder all day long so I have resigned myself to the fact that I now have squirrel and bird feeders.

I can't blame the squirrels. They are following their desires. They seem to have a single-minded focus on my feeders and filling their little bellies. All they know is following the desires of the flesh.

Sadly, we sometimes can be like these little squirrels. We can allow ourselves to have a single-minded focus on filling our bellies and whatever other impulses that arise from the flesh.

But we are more than the flesh. We are also spirit. We are called to rise above the desires of the flesh.

God's law was given to us to control the sinful desires of the flesh. Like squirrels, our sinful human nature has a single-minded focus and it doesn't care who gets hurt in the process.

But we are more than uncontrolled biological processes. We are also spirit.

Lately, it feels like our society has become dominated by those who set their minds on things of the flesh. Like squirrels, they are driven by personal desires without any care or concern for God or others. They defend their actions in noble terms and suggest that anyone who thinks differently is filled with hate.

But God has called us to live according to the Spirit. We are called to set our minds on the things of the Spirit. To set our minds on the Spirit is life and peace.

Those who set their minds on the flesh are hostile to God. It's no surprise that they call Christians evil names and use bullying tactics to get their way. They want nothing to deter them from fulfilling their sinful desires.

We must be careful not to let them pull us down to their level. Christ is in us. We know from Him that we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

He has taught us to turn the other cheek and go the extra mile. I pray that those who are hostile to God and His word would see the Spirit working life and peace in us. I pray that they would learn of the love of God in Christ Jesus and turn from their sinful ways of the flesh.

Prayer: Almighty God, thank You for the gift of Your Spirit. Grant that each day we would turn from our sinful ways of following the flesh and receive the Spirit of righteousness that leads to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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