

**A FAITH WORD**  
**FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH, SWANBERG MN**  
**FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, MARCH 29, 2020**  
**JOHN 11:1-45**

Lazarus and Coronavirus: A Coming Out Party

In the midst of the darkness of Lent, we see the light of Easter. When hope is dashed by death, we are surprised by the movement of life. When Lazarus was dead and putrifying for 4 days, Jesus stands by the stone of the tomb and cries out loudly "Lazarus, come out!"

Today we are anxious and fearful of the coronavirus. We are in the midst of the darkness of Lent. As Christians, we know that light will end darkness and Lent. We are now in the midst of sickness and death. Know also that Jesus is guiding us to end the coronavirus through great doctors and nurses. We are to follow their guidance as they and Jesus pronounce "Coronavirus, come out!"

Lazarus come out. He carries on him yet the burial cloth. Jesus unbinds him and lets him go. He carries on him the marks of decay. Jesus unbinds him and lets him go. He carries within him the loss of 4 days' memory. Jesus unbinds the loss and sets his senses free. He carries with him the grief of separation from family and friends. Jesus unbinds him and gives him back. He carries within him the loves and hopes of a lifetime, captured by death. Jesus unbinds him and frees him to feel, to cry, to love, to rejoice, to embrace, to kiss, to hope.

The coronavirus will come out. We will be unbound. We will be free. We will live in faith and hope.

I have lost grandparents, parents, and sister to death. I want them back. They taught me to love, to feel, to taste chocolate chip cookies, to hear the sound of quarters in my pocket, to play canasta until midnight, to drive grandpa's road grader. They gave me life, they taught me right and wrong, they watched me play my games, they stood by me when I was down. I want them back. I miss them.

I lost my son Christopher when he was 48 years old. He was big and strong. He was helpful and charming. He was loved by so many. I want him back. I miss him. Jesus, you did it for Lazarus, unbind him.

As a Pastor of 52 years, I have officiated at 700 funerals. These were good people. These were church people. They were young and old, rich and poor, sick and healthy. I could not do funerals if I did not believe that Jesus can make the Lazarus story true. I could not do funerals if I did not believe that Resurrection is God's undoing of death. I could not do funerals if I had to continuously be beaten by death.

I believe that Jesus will come to us in death, say our name and exclaim "Come out!" Then the party will begin and we will be free. Unbound from all of life's tethers. Unbound from all evils, hardships and sickness. Unbound from Lent. Unbound from the coronavirus. A coming out party.

Pastor Lee Yarger

**PRAYER FOR A PANDEMIC**

May we who are merely inconvenienced remember those whose lives are at stake. May we who have no risk factors remember those most vulnerable. May we who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent. May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close remember those who have no options. May we who have to cancel our trips remember those who have no safe place to go. May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no margin at all. May we who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home. As fear grips our country, let us choose love. During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbor. Amen.