

Faith is faith in the impossible, because God is a God of the impossible.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 22, 2026

My brothers and sisters in Christ, Faith is a faith in the impossible, because God is a god of the impossible.

In his vision the prophet saw a valley filled with completely dried out dusty human bones. God spoke to Ezekiel asking a ridiculous question: “Son of Man, **can these bones live again?**” Five hundred years later Jesus was making his way to the village of Bethany where his good friend Lazarus had been lying dead in a tomb for four days. **Was it possible for Lazarus to live again?** Again, more years later, the Jewish Pharisee Saul of Tarsus was on his way to Damascus to arrest the followers of Jesus. He had of course heard the outlandish stories of Jesus being raised from the dead. Suddenly, on the road he encountered the risen Christ. Having been transformed from Saul to the Apostle Paul, he wrote a letter to the church in Rome saying: **“the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive** through his Spirit who lives in you.”

Today’s scriptures tell the story of impossible miraculous new life; of flesh clinging to dry old bones giving them new life – of Lazarus’s cold dead body living again – and of the Spirit of God resurrecting mortal bodies, and giving new life while we walk this earth. God is a God of the impossible. But more amazingly, you and I, as children of God, also traffic in the realm of the impossible. We are people of a faith that often stretches beyond what seems possible.

I will never forget the day nine years ago when my son Tim lay in an ICU room in Tampa in a medically induced coma; his broken, stitched-together body barely clinging to life by a wispy thin thread as two of his vital organs started shutting down. One more organ, and there would be no return. It had only been a few nights earlier in the Emergency Room when we had almost lost him twice. Yet, here we were again, fighting for his life. As we held vigil that day, we prayed. Others at St. Marks and around our diocese prayed. A Rector in Tampa showed up in the ICU room, laid his hands on our boy and prayed. Tim lived and is now getting ready to be a father. God is a god of the impossible, and of impossible faith.

I have seen so many of God's beloved children over the years lying at the edge of death as spouses and children and grandchildren stood vigil, awaiting the inevitable end. Family members, desperately holding on to the wispy thin thread of faith; a faith that just might restore their loved one to life, but a faith that might also walk with them through their loss; through the profound soul crushing and heart-rending grief, to an eventual new place of life and hope and love on the other side of loss. Faith is a faith in the impossible, because God is a god of the impossible.

I have seen people of deep faith, crushed by the religious institutions that were meant to sustain and nourish them. Crushed by their church's hypocrisy, rigidity, judgmentalism, and moralism. I have seen the impossible as many of these dear crushed souls were brought back to spiritual life by the breath of the lifegiving Spirit of God and the faithfulness of a loving community.

Faith is faith in the impossible, because God is a god of the impossible. In today's first reading the prophet Ezekiel spoke these words: "I was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord to a valley filled with bones...They were scattered everywhere across the ground and were completely dried out. Then [the Lord] asked me, 'Son of man, can these bones become living people again?' 'O Sovereign Lord,' I replied, 'you alone know the answer to that.'" The way the prophet responded to God demonstrates his great faith in the God of the impossible. A more natural response to such an outlandish question from God may have been: "Can these bones live again? O Lord, absolutely not. Flesh can never return to dry old bones!" But this was not Ezekiel's response. With faith in the impossible, the prophet said to the Lord: "You alone know the answer to that." In other words he was saying, well God, I guess the ball is in your court. You alone know whether the impossible can become the possible; you alone know whether these bones can live again.

Ezekiel's response to God was much like that of the father who came to Jesus one day, asking that he would heal his epileptic son. The father told Jesus: "Lord, I believe you can heal him. Help my unbelief." Ezekiel's response: Can these bones live? Lord, you alone know. The father's response: Can my son be healed? Lord, I believe, and yet, help my unbelief. Sometimes you and I neglect to recognize the power of God, and the power of our faith. We may respond in a similar way, Lord, I believe, but I'm also not quite sure.

In the gospel story, everyone had gathered around Lazarus' tomb that day to grieve over the death of their dear friend. But Lazarus' two sisters, Mary and Martha, grieved even more deeply. Martha poured out her sadness and frustration to Jesus. Why didn't you get here sooner, you could have healed him? But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him. We see in Martha, the same faith in the impossible that was demonstrated by the father of an epileptic son, and the prophet Ezekiel. I believe, help my unbelief. Can these bones live? Lord, you alone know the answer to that. Will my brother Lazarus live again? Jesus, I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.

Jesus responded to Martha in her profound grief with words meant not just for her, but for all humanity down through the ages. He said: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, and the one who lives and believes in me will never die." Jesus was speaking to Martha and to us, of a life in him that is found not only on the other side of physical death, but a life that is meant to be experienced right here and now as we walk and live and breathe. My friends, this is the greatest of all win-wins! Life here, and life then.

The profound hope of resurrection life is like an anchor that holds you and me through all the highs and lows and in-betweens of this life and even beyond death. When you find yourself happy and celebrating the joys of life in this world, faith's anchor holds you from being distracted by the world's many allures. When life is mundane and monotonous, the anchor of resurrection life holds and enlivens you. When you are in the soul-crushing,

heart–rending darkness of grief or hopelessness or fear, the anchor still holds.

Ray Bolz sang a song titled; The Anchor Holds. Its central image is that of a sailboat out on the open raging sea, battered and torn. Here are the lyrics, reminding us of the love and power of God that is always available to us, to hold us in our storms:

I have journeyed
Through the long, dark night
Out on the open sea

By faith alone
Sight unknown
And yet His eyes were watching me

The anchor holds
Though the ship is battered
The anchor holds
Though the sails are torn

I have fallen on my knees
As I faced the raging seas
The anchor holds
In spite of the storm

I've had visions
I've had dreams
I've even held them in my hand

But I never knew
They would slip right through
Like they were only grains of sand

The anchor holds
Though the ship is battered
The anchor holds
Though the sails are torn

I have fallen on my knees
As I faced the raging seas
The anchor holds
In spite of the storm

I have been young
But I am older now
And there has been beauty
That these eyes have seen

But it was in the night
Through the storms of my life
Oh, that's where God proved
His love to me

The anchor holds
Though the ship is battered
The anchor holds
Though the sails are torn

I have fallen on my knees
As I faced the raging seas
The anchor holds
In spite of the storm

I have fallen on my knees
As I faced the raging seas
The anchor holds
In spite of the storm

O God of deep and powerful and abiding love and faithfulness, hold us firm in the raging storms of life. When we lose sight of you because of the challenges and distractions of life, be our anchor, hold us grounded in you.

Faith clings like an anchor to a God of the impossible because it is a faith in the impossible lifegiving God.