



## **Chapel for Week 10, Term 1, 2020**

### **Opening Prayer**

Jesus, a great desire have we  
to walk earth's troubled path with you:  
Come to us now, in converse stay,  
And walk O walk with us day by day! Amen.

## **The Reading**

### **Monday, 30th and Tuesday, 31st March** **Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life – John: 11:1-45**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.' Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and

believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

## The Reflection

Our rather longer than normal reading about the rising from the dead of Jesus' friend Lazarus is a reminder that as we pass the Fifth Sunday in Lent, that is the second last Sunday in Lent, the focus of our Lenten practice and discipline changes so to focus more on the story of Jesus' death and resurrection and less on the earlier Lenten themes of temptation and forgiveness. In times past our reading for today would have been read on what was then called Passion Sunday for it was a strong statement that the Church was anticipating Christ's Passion (the name given for the story of Jesus' Death and Resurrection). Next Sunday which is the sixth and last Sunday in Lent is known as Palm Sunday when we will hear read aloud, sometimes dramatically, and sometimes sung, the Passion story as depicted in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke). In doing so we move into the holiest of weeks in the Christian year, known perhaps unsurprisingly as Holy Week.

This is the week in which the Biblical record describes how Jesus is welcomed triumphantly into Jerusalem, riding a donkey, with palm leaves being strewn before him and songs of praise sung about him (as on Palm Sunday). Later in the week Jesus gathers with his twelve closest disciples in an upper room to celebrate the great Jewish meal of liberation, the Passover. It is during this meal that Jesus institutes a number of important characteristics of the Christian way; first, the Lord's Supper (Eucharist, Holy Communion, Mass) whereby he identifies the unleavened bread and the wine of the Passover meal as his sacramental body and blood of a new covenant to be developed between God and humanity. Secondly, by washing their feet, he indicates the very nature and quality required of their leadership by instructing them that they

are to be humble servants as leaders. Thirdly, he gives us two new commandments which in the new world order under Christ will replace all those commandments and laws as practised by Judaism. It is at the meal that Judas Iscariot is identified as the betrayer.

Following the meal, you may recall that Jesus goes to a mountain to pray to his Father asking the disciples to keep watch which they fail to do. Ultimately Jesus is arrested, Peter denies knowing Jesus. On the next day, known in Christian circles as Good Friday, Jesus is taken for judgment before Pontus Pilate. All of this results in Jesus' crucifixion and death with his body being taken away to be buried according to Jewish custom in a tomb in front of which the Jewish authorities place a large stone! On the third day Jesus rises from the Dead and our Season of Easter with all its joy and hope begins.

Having heard the short summary of the Passion of Jesus you might understand why the reading about Lazarus is pertinent for it is an experience that foretells profoundly through the death and coming to life of Lazarus to what will happen to Jesus. As such we are being introduced and invited to participate in the great mystery of the Christian Church with its life affirming message and great hope that in being prepared to die for us Jesus allows us to be in a right relationship with God. As with the story of Lazarus this is not an easy story/tale/myth to believe especially in a society so dominated by belief in science.

However, for those who come to faith this story of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus is liberation and thereby fills their lives with a hope filled with love of God and neighbour. The question for each of us is about our readiness to accept the invitation that both the story of Lazarus and the Passion of Jesus have so that we might contemplate the redemption and hope Jesus the Christ offers.

## The Prayers

We pray for the Church throughout the world. For the sake of the Gospel might we make the Church's saving presence more visible to the lonely and forgotten among us through sharing of goods and generous self-giving this Lent.

Lord, we pray that you would renew our Hearts.

We pray for our political leaders. May their efforts to foster global peace and justice be rooted in a change of heart that turns away from violence, and seeks the good of the poor, the powerless and defenceless.

Lord, we pray that you would renew our Hearts.

We pray for all who suffer due to a lack of justice in our world. May they find hope and comfort in Christians' increased actions to improve the common good in this Lenten season.

Lord, we pray that you would renew our Hearts.

We pray for all people involved in education that during this holy season of Lent, we might more deeply appreciate the gift of our educational faith communities, rooted in the abiding presence of the crucified and risen Christ.

Lord, we pray that you would renew our Hearts.

We pray for ourselves, that we might be strengthened to look past the doubts and fears which tempt us to abandon our Lenten efforts to live justly as God's people.

Lord, we pray that you would renew our Hearts.

We gather these intentions and those held in the silence of our hearts, uniting them with the prayer Jesus taught us to pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.

## **A Prayer of Blessing**

God, give us strength to run this race,  
God, give me power to do the right,  
And courage lasting through the fight;  
God give me strength to see your face,  
And heart to stand till evil cease,  
And, at last, O God your peace. Amen.