

## **5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent – Passion Sunday - Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

### **The Death of Lazarus - John 11v1-45**

11-3 A man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. This was the same Mary who massaged the Lord's feet with aromatic oils and then wiped them with her hair. It was her brother Lazarus who was sick. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Master, the one you love so very much is sick."

4 When Jesus got the message, he said, "This sickness is not fatal. It will become an occasion to show God's glory by glorifying God's Son."

5-7 Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, but oddly, when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed on where he was for two more days. After the two days, he said to his disciples, "Let's go back to Judea."

8 They said, "Rabbi, you can't do that. The Jews are out to kill you, and you're going back?"

9-10 Jesus replied, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in daylight doesn't stumble because there's plenty of light from the sun. Walking at night, he might very well stumble because he can't see where he's going."

11 He said these things, and then announced, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. I'm going to wake him up."

12-13 The disciples said, "Master, if he's gone to sleep, he'll get a good rest and wake up feeling fine." Jesus was talking about death, while his disciples thought he was talking about taking a nap.

14-15 Then Jesus became explicit: "Lazarus died. And I am glad for your sakes that I wasn't there. You're about to be given new grounds for believing. Now let's go to him."

16 That's when Thomas, the one called the Twin, said to his companions, "Come along. We might as well die with him."

17-20 When Jesus finally got there, he found Lazarus already four days dead. Bethany was near Jerusalem, only a couple of miles away, and many of the Jews were visiting Martha and Mary, sympathizing with them over their brother. Martha heard Jesus was coming and went out to meet him. Mary remained in the house.

21-22 Martha said, "Master, if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died. Even now, I know that whatever you ask God he will give you."

23 Jesus said, "Your brother will be raised up."

24 Martha replied, "I know that he will be raised up in the resurrection at the end of time."

25-26 "You don't have to wait for the End. I am, right now, Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live. And everyone who lives believing in me does not ultimately die at all. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Master. All along I have believed that you are the Messiah, the Son of God who comes into the world."

28 After saying this, she went to her sister Mary and whispered in her ear, "The Teacher is here and is asking for you."

29-32 The moment she heard that, she jumped up and ran out to him. Jesus had not yet entered the town but was still at the place where Martha had met him. When her sympathizing Jewish friends saw Mary run off, they followed her, thinking she was on her way to the tomb to weep there. Mary came to where Jesus was waiting and fell at his feet, saying, "Master, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33-34 When Jesus saw her sobbing and the Jews with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within him. He said, "Where did you put him?"

34-35 "Master, come and see," they said. Now Jesus wept.

36 The Jews said, "Look how deeply he loved him."

37 Others among them said, "Well, if he loved him so much, why didn't he do something to keep him from dying? After all, he opened the eyes of a blind man."

38-39 Then Jesus, the anger again welling up within him, arrived at the tomb. It was a simple cave in the hillside with a slab of stone laid against it. Jesus said, "Remove the stone."

The sister of the dead man, Martha, said, "Master, by this time there's a stench. He's been dead four days!"

40 Jesus looked her in the eye. "Didn't I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

41-42 Then, to the others, "Go ahead, take away the stone."

They removed the stone. Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, "Father, I'm grateful that you have listened to me. I know you always do listen, but on account of this crowd standing here I've spoken so that they might believe that you sent me."

43-44 Then he shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" And he came out, a cadaver, wrapped from head to toe, and with a kerchief over his face.

Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him loose."

45 That was a turnaround for many of the Jews who were with Mary. They saw what Jesus did, and believed in him.

## Thought for the week

There are some funny things going on at the moment and when I say funny I don't mean "Ha ha" funny. A virus that started out as a problem in China has travelled, as we humans travelled, and has now settled in every country in the world. We cannot yet vaccinate ourselves from it so we have to stop moving about and hopefully that means the virus stops moving about and disappears.

The newspapers seem to be very good at telling us what is going on but only ever seeming to share the bad news in a scary way. Most people most of the time will be okay when this all comes to an end but it is uncertain how long it will be until it ends. In the meantime we have to settle down in our households and make the best of it using the opportunity to do things in a different way.

As my father-in-law and self-appointed gardener has to stay in his household I am having to mow the lawn in my household for the first time in many years. We have lots of grass and God has decided that now is the best time to stop the rain and bring out the sun and make the grass grow and grow and grow. Thanks God!

It reminds me that God is a God of life and that this world is, if you stop and look, absolutely teeming with life. If you look up at night you can see all the stars he has created and if you lie face down in the freshly mown grass you can see life toodling about down there too. God is a God of life.

We also see the best of this life too at this time, with people who work in particular sectors going to work day after day to care for people who are suffering with this virus and to protect and provide for the rest of us as we sit things out. Putting themselves at risk but willing to do it for the greater good.

This virus which is stopping people living as they would normally live is not God's idea. It is the opposite of God. How do we know that God is a God of life? Well you could read the bible from end to end to get the message or you could simply look at the Gospel reading for Sunday. John 11v1-45 is the account of Jesus friend Lazarus getting ill and dying and then sees Jesus waiting four days, despite being close by, before he goes to visit. And what a visit.

When he gets there he takes quite a bit of stick off everyone who wonders why he did not come sooner. Then Jesus cries tears at the emotion of the situation. Then he asks for the tomb to be opened, which makes him look crackers, before calling Lazarus out of the tomb. Then what? Well read the words of the page, *"The dead man came out."* A few chapters later we see some of Jesus enemies wanting to bop Lazarus off as he is a living witness, literally, to the power of God available in Jesus. Hey ho.

Now I don't know if I'm going to be back physically in church with you all in a few weeks or if we are going to be like this for a few months. But this I do know. If we are friends of Jesus then we have nothing really to worry about in this life. Jesus will walk with us through whatever we have to go through and then when our time here is up he will walk us from here to our heavenly home, heaven.

What's more Jesus promised that whenever we ask for something in his name he will set about doing it. This account of a man being raised from the dead make us realise that we can ask for whatever and know that Jesus will hear and respond. If he can raise the dead he can do anything! Look out virus.

Keep safe everybody – until next time.  
Rev Ian

## **Questions to ponder**

1. What is the hardest thing about waiting?
2. What do you do when you're really, really happy?
3. What do you do when you feel upset? What makes you feel better?
4. Who do you talk to when you need to share how you feel?

## **A prayer**

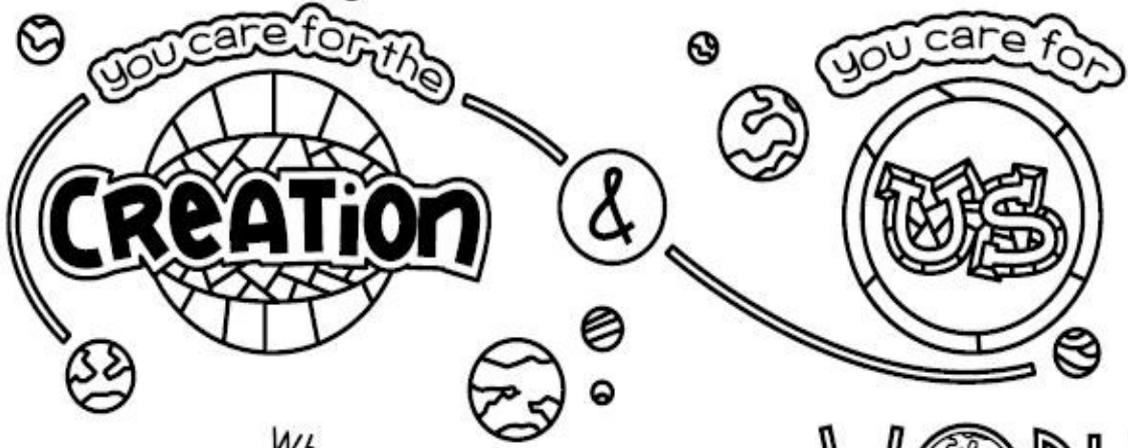
Dear God, thank you for always being with us and caring about us and our feelings.  
Thank you for always listening when we pray.  
Amen.

**HOLY GOD**

**YOU ARE WITH US**

from the spinning planets in our  **SKY** to the

 **tinies** **microbe** that lives on the tiniest paw  
of the tiniest **mouse**.



Whether we are out in the **WORLD**  
or tucked inside our **Home**, we know that you are as **CLOSE** as the

**AIR THAT WE BREATHE.**

Thank You for being our friend and comforter.

**Amen**

