

## THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES: A Service for fifth Sunday in Lent 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits and in His word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning"

Psalm 130. 5-6

**Prayer:** Grant us today, O God, peace with you  
That the certainty that you love us may take all fear away,  
That we may know  
That your love has forgiven us  
That your grace upholds us  
That your welcome awaits us. Amen.

**Collect:** Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world: lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we may know eternal peace through the shedding of our Saviour's blood, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

**Bible Reading:** John 11:1-45 New International Version (NIV)

### The Death of Lazarus

**11** Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. <sup>2</sup> (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

<sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, <sup>7</sup> and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

<sup>8</sup> "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

<sup>9</sup> Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. <sup>10</sup> It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

<sup>11</sup> After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

<sup>12</sup> His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." <sup>13</sup> Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

<sup>14</sup> So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

<sup>16</sup> Then Thomas (also known as Didymus<sup>[a]</sup>) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

## **Jesus Comforts the Sisters of Lazarus**

<sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup> Now Bethany was less than two miles<sup>[b]</sup> from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. <sup>20</sup> When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

<sup>21</sup> “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

<sup>24</sup> Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

<sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

<sup>27</sup> “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

<sup>28</sup> After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” <sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>30</sup> Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. <sup>31</sup> When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

<sup>32</sup> When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

<sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. <sup>34</sup> “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.

<sup>36</sup> Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

<sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

## **Jesus Raises Lazarus From the Dead**

<sup>38</sup> Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup> “Take away the stone,” he said.

“But, Lord,” said Martha, the sister of the dead man, “by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days.”

<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”

<sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

<sup>43</sup> When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" <sup>44</sup> The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

## **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

<sup>45</sup> Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

## **Reflection: Jesus wept (by the Reverend Jane Williams)**

Jesus wept (John 11 verse 35) is well known for being the shortest verse in the Bible, a simple yet complex sentence.

Jesus began to weep after speaking to the sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary and seeing everyone mourning, this is natural enough. However, Jesus had come to Bethany and was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, surely this would mean unbelievable joy, then tearful laughter, then worship. You might think he would be confident and calm then, but instead he was "deeply troubled" and "he wept". **Why?**

- **He has compassion for suffering**

It is true that Jesus felt deep compassion for those who were suffering, he does not take delight in affliction and grief. 'Jesus is the image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1.15). What we see in Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus is a glimpse of how God, our Father feels over the affliction and grief his children experience.

- **The cross was just days away**

Jesus was about to pay the ultimate price for Lazarus's resurrection, not only in the short term, but for eternity. Not just for Lazarus of course, but for us all. The cross was just days away and no-one really knows what inner distress Jesus was feeling at this time. (Luke 12.50) Even though He was able to know the joy that was ahead because of our redemption, the weight of it all was lying heavily on his shoulders.

- **Life for Lazarus, death for Jesus**

Yet another reason for Jesus's tears might have been that He knew raising Lazarus from death may be the final thing that would cause religious leaders to put Him to death. Jesus knew the consequences of his actions, He also knew the sacrifice of His own life needed to be made, He also knew that He would rise from the dead. I wonder if those tears were for us, for our lack of faith, or our reluctance to believe just how much He loved us, loves us, each and every one of us.

Many people have asked me this week, where is God in all of this? During this unprecedented time of suffering and death, of enforced restrictions, at this time of Lent, looking towards the cross as Christians, we must look beyond the cross, to the hope of resurrection. Not forgetting what Jesus suffered for us. Where is our compassionate God now? I firmly believe He is in this with us, right in the centre of it all, helping us, helping the helpers and healers, giving us all hope. Amen.

*Keep a time of quiet for 2-3 minutes; hold up to God in your prayers your own needs, prayers and situation, your family and friends as we shall all try to unite ourselves in prayer this Sunday even though we cannot meet together in Church.*

**Let Us Pray:**

Loving God, we pray for the whole church across the world and especially those suffering the effects of war and famine, we particularly pray for those suffering from Covid – 19.

We pray for our Queen and governor, Elizabeth and all in authority, especially parliament navigating our country at this time. We pray also for our Archbishop Justin, our Bishops, Nicholas and Karen and for all who continue to minister here in the Bride Valley.

Be with everyone working to keep essential services going, NHS workers, carers, pharmacists, food retailers, lorry drivers and refuse collectors. Give wisdom and insight to scientists and engineers working on tests and equipment to help.

We pray for our wedding couples and baptism families, especially those who have had to cancel or postpone during the uncertainty.

Be near to those who are sad because they are far apart from those they love. We pray for those who have lost loved ones, their grief and mourning made more painful by the restrictions on meeting even for funerals.

Let your love be present in every home and your great power protect our loved ones.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer: 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, the power and the glory  
For ever and ever. Amen.

*As we say the following prayer for blessing, let us pray for God's blessing on each other*

**Blessing:** May the Lord bless us and keep us;  
may the Lord make his face shine on us,  
and be gracious to us;  
may the Lord turn his face towards us  
and give us peace;  
and may the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**