

# **Morning Prayer    Passiontide    Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

*You may wish to light a candle.*

## **Call to Worship**

The Lord is my portion, says my soul, therefore will I hope in him. *Lamentations 3:24.*

You will seek me, and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. *Jeremiah 29:13.*

## **Hymn - Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbcBXYP4AIE>



## **Opening Sentences**

O Lord, open our lips and our mouths shall proclaim you praise.

Send your Holy Spirit upon us, and clothe your people with power from on high.

*Pause for reflection as you offer the day to God.*

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and forever. Amen.

## **The Collect**

Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

## **Bible Readings**

### **Epistle – Romans 8: 6-11**

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

## **Gospel – John 11: 1-6, 17-27, 38-45**

### **The Death of Lazarus**

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.

### **Jesus the Resurrection and the Life**

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.'

### **Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life**

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.'

### **The Plot to Kill Jesus**

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

**Sermon – Rev Anne Taylor – see below**

## Prayers

Lord, let us live in the assurance of your love for us. When our understanding is perplexed by doubt and the most intelligent see no further than the coming evening, send us a clear assurance that you are there and not all the roads of goodness are barred. Amen.

Lord Jesus, you healed those who were sick. Strengthen and sustain the staff of the NHS, carers, and emergency services as they are agents of your healing love. In desperate times, keep them strong yet loving; and when their work is done hold them through their weariness and tears. Amen.

Lord Jesus, in whose way of life lies the secret of all life and the hope of all people. We pray for quiet courage to meet these days ahead. We have not chosen to live in such a time; but let its problems challenge us, its discoveries exhilarate us, its injustice anger us, its possibilities inspire us, and its vigour renew us, for your Kingdom's sake. Amen.

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful: watch over us and all those whom we love and hold us all the days of our lives; through 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.

**Hymn – My song is love unknown** *turn up the volume & click on the link*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaR4DSjBLO4>

## The Conclusion

May God our Redeemer show us compassion and love. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## SERMON FOR PASSION SUNDAY – Rev Anne Taylor

**John 11: 1-6, 17-27, 38-45**

The set reading for this morning is one of the longest in the church's year – 45 verses!

I have shortened it for this bulletin but in this time of enforced leisure you may want to read the full passage to verse 45. It certainly rewards a full reading because, apart from the resurrection stories of the first Easter, it is a passage full of hope, giving us the assurance that this life is not the only life but is, rather, a prelude to the life of the world to come. In verse 25 Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live."

But for today I want to reflect on two themes from the earlier verses.

Firstly, we read in Luke 9:58 Jesus says, "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." Jesus was an itinerant preacher, constantly on the move. He hadn't a house of his own to which he could retreat and lock the door for a break or a rest. But there was one place where he could lay down his head and feel relaxed – and that was in the home of Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus in Bethany, a few miles from Jerusalem. There Jesus could be himself as he stayed among friends whom he loved and who loved him.

That very human need of Jesus emphasises the beauty and value – and necessity – of friendship. John Donne famously said, "No man is an island." And in these times of enforced isolation and social distancing due to the coronavirus we are realising how much we are social animals and how much friendship means to us. Up to a few weeks ago we perhaps never thought too much of being able to go out with friends and family, going for meals and coffee with them, meeting them in the pub. But now we know what a precious gift contact and communication is.

Last Sunday, thanks to a team of volunteers, primulas were distributed to many around the parish, and we have been overwhelmed by the response. They were delivered by a knock on the door, a short conversation from 6 feet away, an assurance we were thinking of them. What a difference that made!

Now, more than ever, friendship is so important.

And secondly, it's a bit surprising to read in today's Gospel that Jesus didn't respond immediately when he got the message that his friend Lazarus was ill.

This is one of the puzzling responses of Jesus that we come across in the Gospels – like his apparent reluctance to help the young couple who had just got married in Cana (John 2:4) and his hesitation about healing the daughter of the Canaanite woman (Matt.15:21-28).

In today's incident Jesus is across Jordan, away from Jerusalem. Bethany was just outside Jerusalem. In the previous chapter of John's Gospel we read that the last time Jesus had been in Jerusalem he was not only challenged by the religious leaders in the Temple, but they tried to stone him for claiming that "The Father and I are one." The leaders tried to arrest him but "he escaped from their hands" (10:39).

Jesus knew that to go to Jerusalem again would be the beginning of the end – as it proved to be.

But because he loved Lazarus, Jesus went. The proof of his love was in what he did.

And so for us. We can talk about love till the cows come home, but unless it is translated into action, unless the 'talk' becomes the 'walk', all our talk will be hollow – like the "noisy gong and the clanging cymbal" of 1 Corinthians 13.

Again for us today, love and friendship means a willingness on the part of those who can to do some runs for shopping or to collect prescriptions for those who cannot or should not leave their homes. The proof of love is in what we do. And what can every one of us do to help another? Make contact. 'Phone a Friend' is the famous line from the quiz programme 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire'. Well it now needs to be our strapline. By phoning someone else we offer the wealth of love and friendship.

I know we are all missing our gatherings together in church each week to worship as a community. There is a great loss of being upheld by the community. But as we try to follow Jesus' example of love, let's think of how we put our love for others in our church family and beyond into action, however limited that action must be because of the current restrictions.

Above all, let's keep in contact with one another and continue to pray for one another. We now all have two things in common – the fact that we are have to live through this present difficult time together and we all can be pulled together by God's love and hope for each us. United we will survive the days and months ahead.

Friendship is a priceless gift  
That can't be bought or sold,  
But its value is far greater  
Than a mountain made of gold.

For gold is cold and lifeless,  
It cannot see nor hear,  
And in your times of trouble,  
It is powerless to cheer.

It has no ears to listen,  
No heart to understand.  
It cannot bring you comfort  
Or reach out a helping hand.

So when you ask God for a gift,  
Be thankful that he sends,  
Not diamonds, pearls, or riches,  
But the love of a real, true friend.

Amen.