

News and Prayer Update for 29th March

Rostherne with Bollington, St John High Legh and St Paul Over Tabley

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READINGS FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Old testament reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14

¹ The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

² He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry.

³ He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.'

⁴ Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.

⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live.

⁶ I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.'

⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone.

⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them.

⁹ Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'

¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹ Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely."

¹² Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.

¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.'

Epistle reading: Romans 8: 6-11

⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

⁷ 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,

⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

¹¹ 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.

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Gospel reading: John 11: 1- 45

¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill.

³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.'

⁴ 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.'

⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,

⁶ after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.'

⁸ The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?'

⁹ 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.'

¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.'

¹¹ After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.'

¹² The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.'

¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep.

¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead.'

¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.'

¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.

¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away,

¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.

²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

²¹ Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'

²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.'

²³ Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

²⁴ Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.'

²⁵ Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,

²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' ²⁷ She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, ^[G] the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

²⁸ 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.'

²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.

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Gospel Reading continued

³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.

³¹ 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.

³² 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.'

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

³⁴ He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.'

³⁵ Jesus began to weep.

³⁶ So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'

³⁷ But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

³⁹ 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.'

⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?'

⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me.

⁴² 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.'

⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'

⁴⁴ 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.'

⁴⁵ Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

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REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

The gospel reading for today shows us Jesus full of grief at the death of his close friend Lazarus. He shared the grief of Mary and Martha then and he continues to share our grief now.

Across the world we know that so many people are mourning the loss of loved ones. Many may die of causes unconnected with the current pandemic of Covid-19, for some it may have been expected over a long time, for others it will have arrived unexpectedly. For all who grieve there is a huge sense of loss which leads us all to feelings of sorrow and distress, regret, confusion and uncertainty.

And so, we weep, just as we see Mary, Martha and many of their family and friends doing in this story. They are accompanied and consoled in their grief by friends and family. Sadly, at this time, because of the restrictions, we find that those who mourn cannot benefit from the visits of friends that would cheer them or the hugs that would ease and comfort them.

As clergy we are all too aware of the additional burden that such limitations places on those who are facing the loss of a loved one. However, Jesus provided comfort for Mary and Martha speaking of life both within and beyond this world:

“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.”

This verse continues to provide comfort for us now and is often used at funerals.

Paul, writing to the Romans, picks up the theme of life and death. He points out that life and death are not just about physical being but also spiritual life. We are born to live in God's image an image of love. The way that we do this is to live in Christ as he lives also in us.

Churches are all now closed but the body of Christ – you and I - still moves through this world and we are called, however much or little contact we have with others, to live as people created in the image of love. Saint Theresa of Avila reminds us of what it means to be part of the body of Christ.

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

To know Christ is to have everlasting life; to have such life means to live a life of love.

What does that mean to us at a time when our daily life appears so changed – this strange time when normal social contact and daily interaction with the world around us is limited. How can each of us continue to be spiritual and practical Christians?

Revd Trish

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PRAYER

Prayer for the week from #LiveLent Daily Reflections

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed thy hand hath provided –
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Thomas Chisholm (1866-1960)

You can receive #LiveLent Daily Reflections by email each day— just go to churchofengland.org (link is on home page) or download the #LiveLent App

Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Lent:

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.

Items for prayer:

- The Government as they lead the country at this time
- The scientists who are trying to develop vaccines etc
- Those who are ill
- Those at the forefront of treating those who are ill
- Those who are alone and face months of isolation
- Those who are anxious about their jobs and/or finances

Watch Revd Philip on youtube - go to <https://youtu.be/Yp0K0CTgMe0>

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Jesus Saviour of the World

- 1 Jesus, Saviour of the world, come to us in your mercy:
we look to you to save and help us.
- 2 By your cross and your life laid down, you set your people free:
we look to you to save and help us.
- 3 When they were ready to perish, you saved your disciples:
we look to you to come to our help.
- 4 In the greatness of your mercy, loose us from our chains,
forgive the sins of all your people.
- 5 Make yourself known as our Saviour and mighty deliverer;
save and help us that we may praise you.
- 6 Come now and dwell with us, Lord Christ Jesus:
hear our prayer and be with us always.
- 7 And when you come in your glory: make us to be one with you
and to share the life of your kingdom.

NOTICES

Volunteers

If you know of anyone who needs support, please offer it if you are able or contact the Vicarage as we have some volunteers available to help if you are not.

We would like more volunteers to **check on neighbours** and other people we are in contact with to make sure they are okay and/or to do shopping for those who need it. Please remember to keep to the guidelines on social distance and hand hygiene and do not go into the homes.

These volunteers should not be in the 'at risk' category - i.e. over 70 or with underlying health issues.

A lot of **contact** can take place **by telephone**. This is a good way to help people especially those who live alone. It is also something that those over 70 or at risk can

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help with. Please let us know if you would like to help in this way or if you would like to receive help.

Please contact Philip and Patricia at the Vicarage about any of the above:

Tel: 01565 830 595; Mobile: 07854 418488 or

Email: pmrobinson51@gmail.com

For High Legh please contact Stewart Jackson

Prayer Chain:

Our Reader, Chris Stanisstreet, is organising a **Prayer Chain** which will be done by email and telephone. The idea behind this, is that when a specific prayer request is made it is passed on by group e-mail to the people on the list who then pray for the particular situation.

If you would like to receive prayer requests or would like to make a prayer request, please let them know.

Chris Stanisstreet Tel: 01925 755559; Mobile 07918 981 723;

Email: stanbess2003@yahoo.co.uk

Access to services:

While self-isolating, during illness or in the event of cancelled services it is still possible to access services using the radio or internet, eg:

- Daily Service on Radio 4 long wave at 9.45am Monday to Friday
- Sunday Worship on Radio 4 at 8.10am on Sunday morning
- Church of England website www.churchofengland.org click on "Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for Churches" and scroll to the bottom where there is a list of Churches that livestream on YouTube.
- Premier Christian Radio (on-line station), website: www.premierchristianradio.com