



Worship for Sunday 29th March 2020

Welcome from Jennifer

A very good morning to you all. It is very special to be able to gather with you for worship this morning. I know we are not able to be physically together, but we are together in spirit and prayer. The material for our worship today is largely taken from Roots for Churches. This is a magazine and online resource that I have been subscribing to for many years and helps me on a regular basis to prepare worship for our benefice.

A greeting

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Lord be with you

And also, with you

A Call to Worship

Come and worship the resurrection God,
the Lord of all creation,
who is always present, no matter what.
Worship him today in spirit and in truth.

Hymn: Come down oh love divine

A gathering prayer

God of new life,
God of risen hope,
as we gather today,
may we know your resurrection power in our lives.
May our spirits be renewed.
May our bodies be restored.
Amen.

A prayer of confession (taken from our Lent communion order of service)

Compassion and forgiveness belong to the Lord our God,
through we have rebelled against him.
Let us then renounce our wilfulness and ask his mercy
by confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Pause

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour in thought and word and deed, through negligence, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry and repent of all our sins. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.

We are assured of God's forgiveness

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us, pardon and deliver us from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all goodness,
and keep us in life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Collect for the 5th Sunday of Lent

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.

Bible reading Ezekiel 37: 1-14 (NIV)

37 The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. ³He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know."

⁴Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! ⁵This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. ⁶I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'"

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. ⁸I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

⁹Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

¹¹Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' ¹²Therefore prophesy

and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.'"

A few words of reflection on this passage

This passage from Ezekiel is about hope, something our world needs so powerfully at the moment and is a good theme as we approach the events of Holy Week. Ezekiel speaks to a nation that has lost heart and abandoned hope. After the fall of Jerusalem, the people still believed that all would be well, but as time passed, they began to lose hope. They look around and all they can see is dry bones, the future does not look bright.

From this place of despair Ezekiel reminds the people that God has not abandoned them. God is with them and where there is God there is hope. That hope may only be the size of a thread, but it is there. For where there is God there is hope.

A prayer of thanks and praise

Thank you, Lord, for your constant presence.
Thank you for holding us and comforting us.
Thank you for crying with us when we are hurting.
Thank you for weeping with us when we are broken-hearted.
Thank you, Lord, that you never let us down,
that you always give us hope.
God of new life,
we give you thanks and praise today.
Amen.

Bible reading: John 11: 1-45

11 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ²(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.) ³So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

⁴When 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." ⁵Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. ⁶So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, ⁷and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

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

⁹Jesus 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. ¹⁰It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

¹¹After 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."

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁴Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

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

²⁷"Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

²⁸After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." ²⁹When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹When 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.

³²When 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."

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

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

³⁵Jesus wept.

³⁶Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

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

³⁸Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. ³⁹"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."

⁴⁰Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

⁴¹So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I 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."

⁴³When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴The 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."

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

A few words on the passage

'Jesus wept' this is the shortest verse in the whole of the Bible. Two words, nine letters that carry with them so much meaning. 'Jesus wept'. Two simple words that convey so much meaning. These words reflect Jesus humanity, he felt sadness and loss just as we do. These words reflect Jesus care, compassion and love for us. But we must also remember that when we look at Jesus in tears we are seeing not just flesh and blood crying, but the Word made flesh crying. The Word who is God, Jesus the incarnate God is crying with the world's crying. God feels our hurt and our pain. 'He has borne our griefs' Isaiah wrote 'and carried our sorrows' (Isaiah 53.4).

Notice how Jesus responds to the situation, even though he knows what will come next. Jesus does not dismiss the tears, the grief or the pain. Instead he comes and stands alongside people, shares the pain and grief bearing it to the point of tears. Jesus, the Word made flesh, God incarnate, is acquainted with our human feelings. So, when we find ourselves dealing with feeling of pain and grief, God is truly with us.

Home comforts – (a beautiful reflection from Roots for Churches that I wanted to share with you as we are encouraged to live out our faith each and every day)

Look around at home and identify things that bring you comfort, e.g. a greetings card, running shoes, a photo. In what other ways might you offer comfort to someone when everything seems to be going wrong for them? What Bible verses, hymns or songs give you comfort? Sometimes just being a calm and non-judgmental presence can bring a sense of peace and acceptance to another person – words may not be needed at all! How could you be alongside someone else to offer comfort at the moment? We remember today that Jesus is our ever-present comfort when we are troubled or feel all alone.

Declaring Our Faith

**We believe in God the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named.
We believe in God the Son, who lives in our hearts through faith and fills us with his love.
We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who strengthens us with power from on high.
We believe in one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

Hymn: Be still for the presence of the Lord

Away into prayer – (a beautiful prayer actively to lead us into a time of prayer taken from Roots for Churches)

You can either cut out a teardrop shape from paper or use your imagination. Think of people and places that weep with sadness and need fresh hope and God's resurrection power. Be still and quiet for a few moments, holding or imagining you are holding your teardrop before God.

Then pray:

Thank you, Lord,
that you weep with the world as you wept with Mary and Martha.
Comfort your people as we comfort others.
Bring restored hope to those I hold up before you today.
May they know your resurrection power.
Amen.

Intersessions

Let us pray to the Lord,
who is our refuge and stronghold.

For the health and well-being of our nation,
that all who are fearful and anxious
may be at peace and free from worry:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For the isolated and housebound,
that we may be alert to their needs,
and care for them in their vulnerability:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For our homes and families,
our schools and young people,
and all in any kind of need or distress:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

For a blessing on our local community,
that our neighbourhoods may be places of trust and friendship,
where all are known and cared for:
Lord, hear us,
Lord, graciously hear us.

Take a moment of quite and stillness to add your own prayers to God

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,
to the mercy and protection of God.

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

As our saviour taught us so we pray

The Lord's Prayer

**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.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

(or)

**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.**

The Peace

Since we are justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has given us access to his grace.

The peace of the Lord be with you.
and also with you

I know that we are not together physically today and not able to share the peace in our normal way. However, this does not mean that we are not able to share the peace. Bring to mind members of our church family and as you do wish them God's peace. "..... (the name of a member of our church family) God's peace be with you.

Hymn: To God be the glory

A sending out prayer

Father God, show us how to heal the world you made,
Son of God, teach us to walk with those who suffer
Holy Spirit fill our mouths with the right words.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, help us to show your love to all people. Amen

The blessing

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,
to deny yourselves,
take up your cross and follow him
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always. Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

A prayer for the end of the service

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me.
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

From St Patrick's Breastplate

Material for this service sheet was taken from Roots for Churches and Common Worship.

© ROOTS for Churches Ltd (www.rootsontheweb.com) 2002-2020.
Reproduced with permission.

Common Worship: Services and prayers for the Church of England and New Patterns for Worship
material from which is included in this service are copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2000, 2002.