



Living churches at the heart of their communities...

St Giles', Durham, St Cuthbert's, Shadforth and St Mary's, Sherburn

**Sunday 29 March 2020
Lent 5**

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

Post Communion Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us
that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters
we do also for you:
give us the will to be the servant of others
as you were the servant of all,
and gave up your life and died for us,
but are alive and reign, now and for ever. Amen

Bible Readings

Ezekiel 37. 1-14

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. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 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.'

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

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

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.

John 11. 1-45

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.

Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' 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. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

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.'



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.' And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 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. 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.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

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.'

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

A reflection

Today (29th March) marks the start of the season of Passiontide. It marks a change in our journey through Lent because we now move to looking towards Jesus' passion – his last supper, trial, journey to the cross and crucifixion. It is a time of great uncertainty for the disciples, as they do not know what is going to happen. Jesus has told them that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer, but they perhaps don't want to believe this and are left with a great sense of uncertainty.

It is an appropriate season because it reflects in some way what we are feeling now: Many of us are feeling uncertain about what the future will bring, many of us are afraid, many of us are anxious about those who we love. It is completely understandable to be thinking all of these things in these unprecedented times. But let us never forget that at the end of the Passion and Crucifixion came the Resurrection. Despite the fact that the future looked pretty grim for the disciples, God did something amazing in raising Jesus from the dead.

In our gospel reading today we hear of the Raising of Lazarus. Jesus wept with those who were suffering the pain of the loss of a friend and loved one, and Jesus continues to be with those who are weeping now, through fear, bereavement or suffering. But as Jesus tells Martha: "I am the Resurrection and the Life". They are words of comfort and reassurance that have echoed down the ages, so many people have felt solace in those encouraging words of Jesus. They remind us that even in the gloomiest situation, the light of the Resurrection Life will continue to shine.

As we journey on through the rest of Lent towards Holy Week and Easter, I hope that those words may be a comfort and a hope to us too in these difficult times. Let us continue to put our trust in the God who loves us all so much that he sent Jesus to show us his love, and through his Cross and Resurrection bring us to eternal life.

And please don't feel bad if you are still afraid, even in the midst of these words of comfort we may still feel anxious, we are human after all and fear is a very human emotion, especially in times of uncertainty. But let us remember that even as we move through commemorating Jesus' passion, even as we continue to journey through difficult times, our Lord is always with us, his presence through his Spirit is with us to bring us comfort, confidence and hope. And let us never lose sight of the great hope which the Resurrection brings us, and remember that all will be well.

Morning and Evening Prayer for the coming week

	Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
Sunday 29 March	Jeremiah 31. 27-37; John 12. 20-33	Lamentations 3. 19-33; Matthew 20. 17-end
Monday 30 March	Exodus 8. 1-19; Hebrews 11. 17-31	Jeremiah 21. 1-10; John 11. 28-44
Tuesday 31 March	Exodus 8. 20-end; Hebrews 11. 32-12. 2	Jeremiah 22. 1-5, 13-19; John 11. 45-end
Wednesday 1 April	Exodus 9. 13-end; Hebrews 12. 14-end	Jeremiah 22. 20 - 23.8; John 12. 1-11
Thursday 2 April	Exodus 9. 13-end; Hebrews 12. 14-end	Jeremiah 23. 9 -32; John 12. 12-19
Friday 3 April	Exodus 10; Hebrews 13. 1-16	Jeremiah 24 John 12. 20-36a
Saturday 4 April	Exodus 11; Hebrews 13. 17-end	Jeremiah 25. 1-14; John 12. 36b-end