



Jersey Methodist Circuit

Sunday 29th March 2020

(Original Materials by Rev. Sally Coleman - <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/worship-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>)

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use on its own, or if you are able to watch the service on social media, to aid following the order of service. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you

Opening Prayer

As we come to worship
you might like to have a time of silence
and light a candle.

Then pray:

Holy and Loving God I come to worship you,
as I do, I remember that I am a part of your
church in my community and in the world,
and I take comfort
from the fact that I am not alone.

Come by your Holy Spirit and help me to
worship you in spirit and in truth. Amen

Hymn: StF 370 Breathe on me breath of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5keJHZdWYM>

- 1 Breathe on me, Breath of God
fill me with life anew,
that I may love what thou dost love,
and do what thou wouldst do.
- 2 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
until my heart is pure;
until with thee I will one will,
to do and to endure.
- 3 Breathe on me, Breath of God,
till I am wholly thine;
until this earthly part of me
glows with thy fire divine.
- 4 Breathe on me, Breath of God:
so shall I never die,
but live with thee the perfect life
of thine eternity.

Edwin Hatch (1835-89)

Let us pray together

Holy and Loving God, all life comes from you,
and in you all things hold together.

As we remember this,
we pause to give you thanks and praise.

As we remember this,
we are reminded that you hold
the end from the beginning, and that
nothing is too large or too small for you.

As we remember this,
remind us that as all things are held,
so we are held by you, in love.

Help us in our anxious thoughts.

Help us in our day to day lives.

Help us in this time of deep uncertainty.

We acknowledge that at times we are selfish,
at times we do not seek you first.

But we know that you are always faithful,
merciful, gracious, and forgiving.

(Silence)

We receive your mercy and forgiveness
faithfulness and grace.

In the name of Christ. Amen

Today's Reading from Gospel Reading:

John 11: 1-45 (*Good News Translation*)

Reflections by Deacon Sally Wheadon

Opportunity for reflection...

*Today's readings are full of hope,
reminding us that the resurrection is real,
and new life is possible.*

*Take time to read the gospel passage
slowly and prayerfully again.*

*Is there a word or a passage
that stands out to you?*

*Pause to spend time with that word/
passage.*

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

*If Jesus were stood before you what would
you like to ask him?*

A time of prayer

Let's pray

Holy and Loving God we pray for your world,
for the leaders who are making difficult
decisions as every day brings new changes
and challenges.

Lord of all, Lord for all - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for our nation, that decisions might
be made with wisdom and care for the
benefit of all.

Lord of all, Lord for all - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for our island. For all who live here
that your peace might reign and that your
perfect love might settle our fears.

Lord of all, Lord for all - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for frontline workers,
Doctors, nurses, carers, shop workers,
refuse collectors, postal workers.

Lord of all, Lord for all - **Hear our prayer**

We pray for our loved ones,
those we know who may be ill,
those who are struggling,
those who are confused and conflicted...
(you might like to name names here)

Lord of all, Lord for all - **Hear our prayer**

And finally, we pray for ourselves,
you know what is on our hearts and minds,
and so we offer that to you *(again you might
like to name your own prayers and concerns)*

Lord of all, Lord for all - **Hear our prayer**

AMEN

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father

Hymn: StF 397 The Spirit lives to set us free

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7zbt_nH1Ss&list=RDDnt4ST8HGQA&index=3

- 1 The Spirit lives to set us free,
walk, walk in the light.
He binds us all in unity,
walk, walk in the light.
*Walk in the light, walk in the light,
walk in the light, walk in the light of the Lord*
- 2 Jesus promised life to all,
The dead were wakened by his call,
- 3 He died in pain on Calvary,
to save the lost like you and me,
- 4 We know his death was not the end,
He gave his Spirit to be our friend,
- 5 By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
The Father's kindness is revealed,
- 6 The Spirit lives in you and me,
His light will shine for all to see,

Damian Lundy (1940–1997) © 1978 Kevin Mayhew Ltd
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A prayer of blessing:

May you know the deep peace of the God
who knows and perfectly loves you.

May you take the yoke of Jesus upon you,
knowing that he bears your load with you.

May you know the indwelling Spirit bringing
you wisdom and peace. **Amen**

John 11:1-45 Good News Translation (GNT)
The Death of Lazarus

11 A man named Lazarus, who lived in Bethany, became sick. Bethany was the town where Mary and her sister Martha lived. (²*This Mary was the one who poured the perfume on the Lord's feet and wiped them with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was sick.*)³ The sisters sent Jesus a message: "Lord, your dear friend is sick."⁴ When Jesus heard it, he said, "The final result of this sickness will not be the death of Lazarus; this has happened in order to bring glory to God, and it will be the means by which the Son of God will receive glory."

⁵ Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

⁶ Yet when he received the news that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was for two more days.

⁷ Then he said to the disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had been buried four days before.¹⁸ Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem,¹⁹ and many Judeans had come to see Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother's death.

²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed in the house.²¹ Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died!²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask him for."²³ "Your brother will rise to life," Jesus told her.²⁴ "I know," she replied, "that he will rise to life on the last day."

²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die;²⁶ and those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?"²⁷ "Yes, Lord!" she answered. "I do believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

²⁸ After Martha said this, she went back and called her sister Mary privately. "The Teacher is here," she told her, "and is asking for you."²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up and hurried out to meet him.

³² Mary arrived where Jesus was, and as soon as she saw him, she fell at his feet. "Lord," she said, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died!"

³³ Jesus saw her weeping, and he saw how the people with her were weeping also; his heart was touched, and he was deeply moved.³⁴ "Where have you buried him?" he asked them. "Come and see, Lord," they answered.³⁵ Jesus wept.³⁶ "See how much he loved him!" the people said.³⁷ But some of them said, "He gave sight to the blind man, didn't he? Could he not have kept Lazarus from dying?"

³⁸ Deeply moved once more, Jesus went to the tomb, which was a cave with a stone placed at the entrance.³⁹ "Take the stone away!" Jesus ordered.

Martha, the dead man's sister, answered, "There will be a bad smell, Lord. He has been buried four days!"

⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Didn't I tell you that you would see God's glory if you believed?"⁴¹ They took the stone away. Jesus looked up and said, "I thank you, Father, that you listen to me.⁴² I know that you always listen to me, but I say this for the sake of the people here, so that they will believe that you sent me."⁴³ After he had said this, he called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

⁴⁴ He came out, his hands and feet wrapped in grave cloths, and with a cloth around his face. "Untie him," Jesus told them, "and let him go."

⁴⁵ Many of the people who had come to visit Mary saw what Jesus did, and they believed in him.

REFLECTIONS: by Deacon Sally Wheadon

This worship resource has been adapted for the service which is being streamed from St Helier Methodist Centre on Sunday 29th March but if you have seen a copy of the original you will know that, in place of a sermon, it advises you to read the gospel passage reflectively to see what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. Well I want to share with you today something that I felt the Holy Spirit was saying to me some years ago and although it's not directly connected with our Bible reading this morning, it does kind of fit and I feel that it is worth sharing in the present crisis.

But first, let's take a look at the reading from John's gospel because it is particularly relevant as events unfold before our very eyes, both here in our island and across the world. I come from Cornwall originally, my husband Danny and I moved to Jersey some eighteen months ago. Most of our family still live in, or very close to Cornwall and sadly there have been several deaths over there now due to the corona virus. And I was shocked when the details of the first victim emerged because when I saw his photograph, I realised that I knew him. We had mutual friends so had been at some of the same social events. I'd had conversations with him and his wife, he was a kind and gentle man.

When we lose loved ones, it's natural to question, even to be angry. Mingled with their grief, I sense some anger in Martha and Mary. When Jesus finally arrives, the first thing Martha says to him is "If you had been here, Lord, my brother would not have died!" And then when Mary appears on the scene, she repeats "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!" And we see some of the wider group also questioning: "He gave sight to the blind man, didn't he? Could he not have kept Lazarus from dying?" And when we are grieving, we do question don't we? Often people who wouldn't ordinarily claim to believe in God suddenly find themselves asking: Why did you let this happen? Where were you when I needed you? Why didn't you save them?

We know, all too painfully, that people die, and yet in sharing this account of Jesus raising Lazarus, the writer of John's gospel wants us to know that Jesus has power over life and death. Jesus says in John chapter 5 "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself, he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. And so we know that our Father in heaven is more powerful than death and this is demonstrated in our gospel reading today as we see Lazarus come out of the tomb after four days.

And yet, outside of the Scriptures, personally I've never seen anyone who has been dead for four days come back to life. We hear stories of people dying momentarily in an ambulance or on an operating table but I think it would be an incredibly rare occurrence for someone to return to an earthly existence after four days, if it's ever happened at all.

But I want to share with you now something of my own experience of what I felt the Holy Spirit was saying to me some twenty years ago when my uncle was dying in a hospice. He was my mother's twin brother and they were particularly close, not just because they were twins, but because both their parents died when they were relatively young. Their father died when they were teenagers and their mother died when I was a little girl. Anyway, seeing my uncle close to death and my mum distraught, I decided that I wasn't having any of it. I decided that I was going to sort it out, I was going to pray to God and demand a miracle. So I went home and lay prostrate on the floor and I bargained, begged, pleaded and demanded. And when I was finally exhausted I sat in the chair, picked up my Bible and said "Now I want proof that the miracle has happened and my uncle is healed." Then I opened the Bible randomly looking for confirmation and my eyes immediately fell on Luke Chapter 24, an account of the resurrection of Jesus. It read 'On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and

went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.” It goes on to tell us that suddenly two men in gleaming clothes appear and said to them “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!”

Well I was amazed that the Bible had opened at this passage and then I felt the Holy Spirit saying to me “Here is the miracle you are looking for, the miracle above all miracles. But it’s not just for you, and your uncle and your family, it’s for all people for all time.” Well, of course my uncle died a day later because he was an incredibly sick man but although I was sad, I was at peace with it. And I was at peace with it because of the miracle of the empty tomb. The empty tomb is the miracle that we need to focus on in this crisis, amidst all the suffering and grief, we have a sure and certain hope of ever lasting life.

But, in the meantime, as the death toll rises daily, let us keep in mind that when Jesus saw Mary and the people with her weeping, he was deeply moved, and he wept with them. We have a God who cares deeply about our pain and who weeps with us but who also offers us ever lasting life in a place where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain if only we will believe it.

In this current time it’s not easy ‘not’ to be troubled and afraid, but I urge you to cast your burdens on Jesus for he does indeed care for you and above all, I urge you to keep in focus the miracle of the empty tomb.