

Welcome to church, Jim, but not as we know it.

Thank you for joining us for our online service today, the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent. Although our church buildings are closed, the church still continues – in worship, in prayer, in acts of love and service.

In our worship today – you can find all the words used on the church website [pcd.org.uk/services](http://pcd.org.uk/services) or follow the link on the website homepage, if you haven't already been sent a copy – we shall be focusing on Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead, a passage which includes the shortest verse in the bible – Jesus wept. You'll also find resources for children there which Denise has prepared.

However we are feeling this morning, we worship a God in Jesus Christ who is with us wherever we are, and whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. There will be no hymns or songs for you to join with, and the form of service is a simple celebration of Holy Communion. As Helen and I share bread and wine, we invite you to receive spiritually the life of Jesus who died for us on the cross. We begin with a moment of silence.

## **The Lord is Here – Holy Communion**

*We say together the words printed in **Bold***

### **Call to worship**

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.**

## ***The Greeting***

*The minister greets the people and invites them to pray:-*

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open,  
All desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
By the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
That we may perfectly love you,  
And worthily magnify your holy name;  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## ***The Prayers of Penitence***

God our Father, we come to you in sorrow for our sins.  
For turning away from you, and ignoring our will for our lives;  
Father, forgive us:  
**Save us, and help us.**

For behaving just as we wish, without thinking of you;  
Father, forgive us:

**Save us, and help us.**

For failing you by what we do, and think, and say:

Father, forgive us:

**Save us, and help us.**

For letting ourselves be drawn away from you by temptations in the world around us;

Father, forgive us:

**Save us, and help us.**

For living as if we were ashamed to belong to your Son;

Father, forgive us:

**Save us, and help us.**

*The minister says words of absolution*

May the God of love and power

forgive you and free you from your sins,

heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,

and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **The Collect**

*After a moment of silence the minister says the prayer of the day:*

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. **Amen.**

## **The Ministry of the word**

*When the Gospel is announced the reader says*

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Our reading follows the encounter between Jesus, Martha and Mary, two sisters who are friends of Jesus whose brother Lazarus has just died. This version is dramatized, and we hear the voice of a narrator, Jesus and Martha.*

John 11:1-45 New International Version (NIV) - The Death of Lazarus

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

<sup>4</sup>When 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." <sup>5</sup>Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. <sup>6</sup>So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, <sup>7</sup>and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." <sup>17</sup>On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. <sup>18</sup>Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup>and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. <sup>20</sup>When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

**Martha:** <sup>21</sup> Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.

**Jesus:** <sup>23</sup> Your brother will rise again.

**Martha:** I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.

**Jesus:** I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?

**Martha:** <sup>27</sup> Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.

**Narrator:** <sup>28</sup> After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside.

**Martha:** The Teacher is here, and is asking for you.

**Narrator:** <sup>29</sup> When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>32</sup> When 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." <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. <sup>34</sup> "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

**Martha:** Come and see, Lord

**Narrator:** <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>38</sup> Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. <sup>39</sup> "Take away the stone," Jesus said.

**Martha:** But, Lord by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days.

**Narrator:** Jesus said "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God? Lazarus, come out!"

**Narrator:** The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

*At the end*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

Stories of Jesus raising people from the dead occur in all four gospels, but only Gospel writer John records the raising of Lazarus, the gospel reading we've just heard. In it we see Jesus presence transforming a situation.

I just want to reflect briefly on this passage which raises big questions – the explicit question on the lips of Martha and Mary– if only, in other words 'where is God'? Where were you, Jesus, when my brother died. Now, even this statement expresses both frustration and hope – clearly in Martha's words is frustration, even anger – If you had been here Jesus... At the moment our lives are full of all sorts of feelings, and it's ok to express them - it's ok not to be trying to be cheerful, it's ok to lament and be angry and sad and to rage. You don't have to 'make the best of it' every minute of every day of this thing. It's ok if you're teaching children at home not to become a full time qualified headteacher overnight.

And then there's that verse – one verse, two words, yet so powerful – John 11:35 – Jesus wept. He wept for Mary and Martha, as he identified with them. Whatever you're feeling today, joy, frustration, sadness, overwhelming tiredness, Jesus has felt. Have a look at the gospels and you'll see the whole range of emotions in Jesus life. Hang on to that.

And yet, Jesus then also went to where Lazarus had been lying dead for 4 days and said 'come out, Lazarus' – and Lazarus did. Now, make no mistake – one day Lazarus died again and was buried-but now was not his time, and Jesus immense power over death was demonstrated to show the glory that his Father had given him, glory that would be seen so supremely in Jesus own death on the cross, where again he identifies with us – his death brings us life.

In two weeks' time it will be Easter Day. For all of us, it will be an Easter unlike any others. It's something I've written about in our parish newsletters which hopefully you have seen. There we see more than Jesus

coming back to life, as he did for Lazarus. In Jesus resurrection we see a promise – the promise that Martha identified at the beginning of her encounter with Jesus – Lazarus will rise again at the last day – and Jesus in his response to her makes it clear that this is not just an abstract concept – but a person – Jesus himself. He is resurrection, and he is life. His life transforms whatever we are feeling and experiencing at the moment. Why not spend some time in quiet reflection. Just as we are commended to take our daily exercise, let's also use this strange and unique time to develop our spiritual life too – spending time as Mary and Martha did with the one who can be for us resurrection and life, the one who weeps with us, but whose death and resurrection brings promise and hope today.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for your encounter with Mary and Martha,

Thank you that you brought to them the promise of resurrection life.

Transform our sadness, frustrations and challenges by being present with us today and every day. **Amen.**

## **Affirmation of Faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in Him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in Him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in all the world?

**We believe and trust in Him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## **Prayers of intercession**

*This response may be used*

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

## **The Lord's prayer**

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

**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 Communion**

*We remember Jesus words at the Last Supper before we join together in sharing bread and wine.*

## **Concluding Prayer, Blessing and Dismissal**

*After a moment of silence a special closing prayer for the day is said, followed by a prayer of blessing*

**As we wait on you, Lord God,  
renew our strength, our hope, and our vision  
to be your arms in this world,  
reaching out and enfolding with love  
all those we meet this week.  
Amen.**

We close with a Celtic blessing based on the words of St Patrick:-

Christ be with you. Christ within you.

Christ behind you. Christ before you.

Christ beside you. Christ to win you.

Christ to comfort and restore you.

Christ beneath you. Christ above you.

Christ in quiet and in danger.

Christ in hearts of those who love you.

Christ in mouth of friend and stranger. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

*Thank you for joining in with our service this morning.*

*Next Sunday is Palm Sunday. As we can't distribute palm crosses, you might want to find one from a previous year, and in our all-age service being live streamed next Sunday at 10.30am, we'll be making palm crosses in Blue Peter style, so please have two thin strips of paper ready!*

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