

# LAZARUS – Redhill 2020 Home Worship Sheet

## Prayer

**Loving God, you are worthy of all of our praises. You reign in majesty over us forever. We thank you for your presence today and may your name be hallowed. Accept our love and adoration in Jesus' name. We pray, Almighty God that you will light our way by your word and your Spirit, that all people may see your glory through us and come to worship you as the living God.**

## Hymn: Today I awake

**This Youtube clip has no subtitles, please use the words below as you listen.**

**To do this: RIGHT click on the link and select OPEN IN NEW TAB. You will be able to start the video and easily return to this page.**

**You may need to end the video so that others don't continue to play in the background.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Prs9ZoACHeY>

Today I awake and God is before me.  
At night, as I dreamt, God summoned the day;  
For God never sleeps but patterns the morning  
with slithers of gold or glory in grey.

Today I arise and Christ is beside me.  
He walked through the dark to scatter new light,  
Yes, Christ is alive, and beckons his people  
to hope and to heal, resist and invite.

Today I affirm the Spirit within me  
at worship and work, in struggle and rest.  
The Spirit inspires all life which is changing  
from fearing to faith, from broken to blest.

Today I enjoy the Trinity round me,  
above and beneath, before and behind;

The Maker, the Son, the Spirit together  
they called me to life and call me their friend.

*Words and Music: John Bell*

## New Testament Reading [John 11:1-45](#)

### Sermon

On 12<sup>th</sup> March 2011, there was an earthquake and tsunami which hit Japan badly. There were nearly 20,000 deaths and about 2,000 people were never found.

**Nine days** after the earthquake and tsunami, an 80 year old woman called Sumi Abe and her 16 year old grandson Jin Abe, were rescued alive from the rubble of their home. Jin had been able to reach the fridge and get enough food and drink out to keep his grandmother and himself alive until they were found by rescuers who had all but given up hope of finding anyone else alive.

On the face of it, things had looked pretty bleak for Jin and his grandmother – and yet against the odds, things worked out.

There are times in our lives when things look pretty bleak and indeed this time of self-isolation and social distancing whilst the Corona virus spreads around the world is one of those times. But our bible reading today tells us that we have a reason to hope that against the odds, things might work out for us too.

In John's gospel, the author has recorded a total of eight miracles that Jesus performed. He has chosen these particular miracles, out of the many that he witnessed, because each of them demonstrates something about Christ that he wanted to explain.

John says of the miracles, or **signs** as he calls them,

*“These are written **that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name**” (20:31)*

So how does this morning's reading help us to believe and to find life in Jesus' name?

Well here is a story of someone who **dies** and yet who is **restored to life**. And by way of explaining what the sign means, Jesus says *“I am the resurrection and the life”*

I am sure that you know people who say “I believe that Jesus was just a good man”

I don't know any other good men who claimed to be “the resurrection and the life” – and then proved it.

It is through **me** – Jesus was saying, that life is sustained, restored and resurrected.

No mere good man could have said that. And by way of demonstrating the truth of his claim, Jesus called

**“Lazarus, come out” – and the man who had died came out.**

Now I don't know how just how bleak things may feel for you this morning – maybe you feel as hopeless as Sumi and Jin after nearly 9 days of being buried alive without being found. But for Lazarus who had actually died and whose body had lain for four days in the tomb, things could not have looked much bleaker.

Like the story of the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision, the likelihood of a positive outcome looked more than a little remote. But in the same way that in that vision God brought the bones together, covered them with tendons and flesh and then breathed into them and brought them back to life – so Jesus called

**“Lazarus, come out” – and the man who had died came out.**

God alone, has the power and authority to bring about a movement from death, to new life. And that power and authority has been given to Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Saviour and Redeemer of us all.

Many of us remember the struggles in South Africa which came to a head at the end of the nineteen eighties and beginning of the nineteen nineties. We remember the tensions and the potential for bloodshed on an enormous scale. On the face of it, things had looked pretty bleak in South Africa – and yet against the odds, things worked out.

And in 1994, the vote was given to all South Africans over 18, regardless of racial background.

One of the key influences through that period was Archbishop Desmond Tutu who back in 1985 had received the Nobel Peace prize for his fight against apartheid and white minority rule.

Despite the bleak outlook, this man hung onto God and prayed for a miracle – and that miracle came about.

Desmond Tutu was also head of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission which in his own words “attempted to cleanse our nations's soul from the evil of apartheid” and bring closure.

For three years he listened to horrific stories of abuse. He says, “I cannot tell you how many times my heart broke as I listened to the confessions of perpetrators and the testimony of victims. Indeed at times I became sick to my stomach at the horror of what I heard.”

He also travelled to Rwanda and saw the evidence of the genocide there.

It is easy to think of such horrors as happening far away, but Desmond Tutu also points out that “Our cruelties are played out in the intimacy of our own homes and neighbourhoods just as much as they are experienced on the world stage”.

So what effect has all this exposure to horrific human behavior had on the archbishop? How has identifying with the dead, the abused and the tortured affected him?

Instead of the cynicism or pessimism that might develop in many, Desmond Tutu (in partnership with his daughter who has worked with rape survivors) wrote a book called “Made for Goodness.”

If anyone else had written it they might have been accused of living in cloud cuckoo land. But the archbishop shares that although we are capable of horrific behavior, we are made for goodness and we thrive and flourish when we allow that goodness to guide us. And his experiences give him the authority to draw this conclusion.

Here is a man who has accompanied many into the emotional darkness of the tomb – but he did not stay there.

It was all so easy in the story of Lazarus. Jesus called

**“Lazarus, come out” – and the man who had died came out.**

It all happened so instantly. Desmond Tutu’s journey out of the tomb took years.

But perhaps our whole lives are symbolized by Lazarus in this reading. In our natural state, we are spiritually dead, we fall short of the glory of God. We may be alive in the flesh, but the life of the flesh is **all** we have.

And then one day Jesus calls us by name – and tells us to come out. And slowly, with the help of perhaps many Christians along the way, we come out of the tomb, into the light.

Unlike Lazarus who was merely restored to earthly life for a while, the new life that we are called into is a life which transcends our current existence, enabling us to say not that we **will** enter eternal life but that we **have begun** eternal life – or as Jesus puts it *whoever lives and believes in me will never die*.

Now I don’t know how bleak things may feel for you this morning but as John said

“These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”

*Jesus said I am the resurrection and the life...and he called*

**“Lazarus, come out” – and the man who had died came out.**

## Prayers of Intercession

Friends in Christ,  
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers  
as dear to us as our own needs.  
Loving our neighbors as ourselves,  
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions  
on behalf of the church and the world.

*We make our prayers for ourselves and others, concluding with:*

**Hear our prayers, God of power,  
and through the ministry of your Son  
free us from the grip of the tomb,  
that we may desire you as the fullness of life  
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.**

## Hymn

[How deep the father's love for us](#)

## The Final Prayer

God of all grace  
who has called us to eternal glory in Christ,  
raise us to new life,  
confirming and strengthening us;  
and to him be the power for ever and ever. **Amen**

The almighty and merciful Lord,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
Bless us and keep us now and always. **Amen**