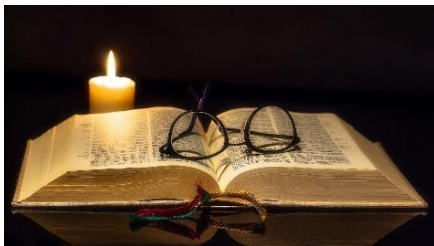


15th August 2021

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.

Opening Prayer: Almighty Creator God, you are the source of all good, of all light, and of life itself. Thank you that you come to us in Jesus, the resurrection, and the life. Thank you for the life you offer to us, help us believe, receive and live. Pour out your Spirit upon us that we might, like Lazarus, though once dead in sin be made alive in you, and be a sign to our friends, neighbours and society of your glory. **Amen.**

Song:

Thine be the glory
Risen conquering Son
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won
Angels in bright raiment
Rolled the stone away
Kept the folded grave clothes
Where Thy body lay

*Thine be the glory
Risen conquering Son
Endless is the victory
Thou o'er death hast won*

Lo! Jesus meets us
Risen from the tomb
Lovingly, He greets us
Scatters fear and gloom

Let the church with gladness
Hymns of triumph sing
For her Lord now liveth
Death hath lost its sting

Thine be the glory...

No more we doubt Thee
Glorious Prince of life
Life is naught without Thee
Aid us in our strife
Make us more than conquerors
Through Thy deathless love
Bring us safe through Jordan
To Thy home above

Thine is the glory...

Read: John 11:17-48 – God brings life.

A summary of the talk given by David Bush.

If you are reading this, I suspect it is likely that, like me, you are not able to be in the services this week in person. For me, being still restricted in face-to-face events, I want to pay tribute to the friends and fellow church members who have been my twice weekly companions in our live, online, Monday and Wednesday morning and night prayer sessions (OK worship and chat!). And it is wonderful that we will be keeping these services going – live and online, twice a week – to add to our church's repertoire of services.

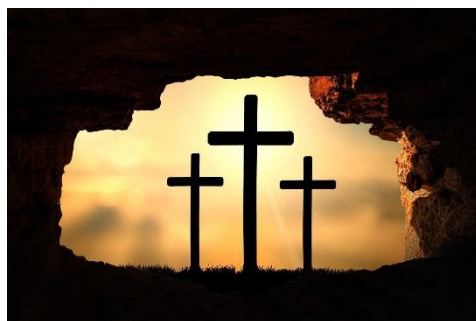
It is incredible, to me anyway, the way in which when one sits down with an old and familiar passage, and one tries to look at it afresh.

- We can read in the passage about Martha and Mary, but that isn't the point.
- We can read here about Martha's faith, but that isn't the point.
- We can see Jesus anguished by the suffering of those who loved Lazarus – but that isn't the point.
- We can see a Jesus who can raise Lazarus from the dead. But that also isn't the point.

All this is the back story.



There is a whole arc here of Jesus demonstrating through his supernatural powers, that he is the Messiah, with pro-and-anti witnesses to that reality. Jesus *is* the resurrection and the life! But, despite the light of over-whelming evidence the religious leaders, with their possessiveness of 'their temple', 'their religion', still think that 'for the greater good' it would be best to see Jesus handed over and killed. The point of the Lazarus story is to counterpoint the incredible behaviour of the religious leaders and their unwillingness to believe in Jesus.



Have you seen the film 'Hot Fuzz'? In Hot Fuzz, as a punishment a police officer is posted to a sleepy country village. He discovers some odd and

suspicious accidents. The twist is that instead of preventing crime, the Neighbourhood Watch Alliance has just been killing people for decades in order to keep Sandford – the village the way they want it to be... Defending their actions by claiming it's all for... yeah... the greater good.

These days our society carries a populist refrain of hostility to foreigners and outsiders, a setting up factions – anonymous “them” who aren’t “us”, a hoarding of our wealth and resources to ‘us’ and not spending it on an undeserving ‘them’. ‘Our village’, ‘our country’, ‘our church’, ‘our parish’, ‘our jobs’, ‘our money’. Ironic when these are not ours at all, but a gift from God.

Unrecognised, these pressures of our society today can suck us into the same abyss the religious leaders in the passage found themselves in – that their betrayal was explicit and ours risks being implicit really isn’t the point.

So, what to do?

Believe in Jesus and live! Live as he would live, demonstrating love and value to all.

This week, I urge you to become aware of those influences around us. Once a day at least, more if you can, when you watch the news, read a newspaper, listen to others speak, read your WhatsApp or Facebook.

Stop ... and ask yourself, and ask God, whether what you are hearing is emphasizing division – ideas like ‘us and them’, whether it is seeking to possess and own ‘our such-and such’ and exclude others from that gift we are blessed with ... whether others suffering is being justified by ‘our greater good’.

And when you notice it Jot it down. And jot down what you thought, felt and did. It is a good defence against following the sins of the chief priests and the pharisees. It might just be the way to make sure you pursue God’s greater good rather than your own.



Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: 11th after Trinity: *O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace, that we, running the way of your commandments, may receive your gracious promises, and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure; 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.*



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.**

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, COGS, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am. and 9.30am. Further information is on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard. 01420 563344.

