**Sunday 29th March 2020** WORSHIP AT HOME: Lent 5, Passion Sunday

Welcome to our act of Worship for Passion Sunday when we reflect on the immeasurable love of God displayed through Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection. In this current time of uncertainty and anxiety we are reminded God loves and cares about you!

Call to worship Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. … Do not fear, for I am with you; (Isaiah 43 verse1b and 5a)

A Prayer of Approach

God of new life,
God of risen hope,
may we know your resurrection power in our lives.
May our spirits be renewed.
May our bodies be restored.

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

HYMN: There’s a wideness in God’s mercy

Tune: Coverdale

HP 230, MP 683, RS 353, STF 416

(Some of the hymn books widely used in the Wiltshire United Area)

Prayer of Praise

Eternal God, source of all life and love,
we praise you for your goodness to us

and to all people.
In creation you gave life to the world.
In Christ you redeemed the world,
bringing life from death,

hope from despair.
In the Spirit you give us new life here and now,
and challenge us to live as resurrected people
in the Church and in the world.
Give us hearts and minds ready to hear your voice
and to do your will, day by day. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession Before the Confession please read Psalm 130, (printed overleaf) this is the set psalm for today, then have a short time of silence:

As our souls and minds wait for you, O God,
we offer all of our lives;
the things we have done

and the things we have not done,
the things of which we are ashamed and
the ways in which we have hurt other people.
In your steadfast love,
forgive and redeem us,
as we claim the promise
that in Jesus our sins are forgiven. **Amen.**

HYMN In the cross of Christ I glory

HP167, MP 338 , RS224 , STF -

**GOSPEL John 11 v 1-45 with special focus on:**

18Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away ... 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.’ 23Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ 24Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ 25Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ 27She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Praise to Christ our Lord

REFLECTION

“If only…” (verse 21)

How many of us are presently using “if only…” in connection with Corvid 19! It’s hard being stuck inside, especially when it is sunny outside, there is a real sense of imprisonment. Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Jenny Harries said on Thursday infection rates will rise for “two to three weeks” then fall **if only** everyone respects the current lockdown! We keep on hoping and praying, whilst making sure we isolate and regularly wash our hands!

*If only* we use that term to express a strong wish that things could be different. Martha uses it in relation to her deceased brother and her faith in Christ. I find Martha an amazing person, she is the one who gets so agitated when her sister Mary won’t help with the chores. Yet here she is displaying a faith of deeper understanding than the disciples.

“Lord if only you had been here” Martha says to Jesus. That’s a poignant question, especially for where we currently find ourselves. There is much theological speculation about why Jesus doesn’t immediately go to Bethany on hearing of Lazarus illness. The one I’m drawn to is Jesus carries his

concern for Bethany friends from the moment he hears about them but is also worried about his and the disciple’s safety if they journey so physically close to Jerusalem. John 11 can be read as a parable by those who want to know where God is when life falls apart. What is important to cling to, is the image that he is present even in his absence. We find this directly illustrated in John 4 when Jesus whilst at Cana in Galilee heals a Royal official’s dying son who is in Capernaum – present though seemingly absent. As we each continue in this time of lockdown or self-isolation may we remember this.

Terry Waite who spent almost five years as a Beirut hostage ends his poignant book, *Taken on Trust* with words discovered written on the wall of cellar in Cologne, Germany at the end of World War II. Mostly likely written by someone who died whilst in hiding during the Holocaust.

“I believe in the sun even when it is not shining.

I believe in love where feeling is not.

I believe in God, even if God is silent.”

Amen

HYMN I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship

HP238, MP266, RS265, ST350,

*ALTERNATIVE: If you are at home with little people, they might like this:* God is with us wherever we go… *To the tune “Here we go round the mulberry bush” (It’s a good song to sing on the move!)*

God is with us wherever we go,

Wherever we go

Wherever we go,

God is with us wherever we go,

All day long!

Our Prayers. We pray to the God who hears our cries and sees our hearts.

To all those who are alone and feel isolated from community:
**be a companion and friend.**

To children who can’t play with their friends and whose days lack structure:
**be a companion and friend.**

To those who grieve for loved ones who have died:
**bring healing and comfort.**

To decision makers and all in authority:
**give wisdom and compassion.**

To neighbours and all who seek to help others:
**give wisdom and compassion.**

For those who work in the health service:
**we give thanks and ask your blessing.**

For those who care for us and make us smile:
**we give thanks and ask your blessing.**

In the name of Jesus, who is Resurrection and Life.
**Amen**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

The Lord’s Prayer

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.

HYMN To God be the glory...

HP 463, MP708, RS289, STF 94,

Blessing

God live in you his risen life, this day and for ever more. Amen.

To those who have the virus and those who are concerned about loved ones:
**bring healing and comfort.**

Reflection: “The best of all is, God is with us!”

*attributed to John Wesley*

Rev David Coppard @ Wiltshire United Area,

Bank Chaplain @ Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton

***Psalm 130 Waiting for Divine Redemption***

*1 Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
2   Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
   to the voice of my supplications!*

*3 If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
   Lord, who could stand?
4 But there is forgiveness with you,
   so that you may be revered.*

*5 I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,
   and in his word I hope;
6 my soul waits for the Lord
   more than those who watch for the morning,
   more than those who watch for the morning.*

*7 O Israel, hope in the Lord!
   For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
   and with him is great power to redeem.
8 It is he who will redeem Israel
   from all its iniquities.*

**John 11 v 1-45 The Death of Lazarus**

11Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. 3So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, ‘Lord, he whom you love is ill.’ 4But 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.’ 5Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, 6after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

7 Then after this he said to the disciples, ‘Let us go to Judea again.’ 8The disciples said to him, ‘Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?’ 9Jesus 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. 10But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.’ 11After saying this, he told them, ‘Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.’ 12The disciples said to him, ‘Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.’ 13Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. 14Then Jesus told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead. 15For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.’ 16Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, ‘Let us also go, that we may die with him.’

17 When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, 19and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. 20When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. 21Martha said to Jesus, ‘Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.’ 23Jesus said to her, ‘Your brother will rise again.’ 24Martha said to him, ‘I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.’ 25Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?’ 27She said to him, ‘Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.’

28 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.’ 29And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. 30Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31The 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. 32When 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.’ 33When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. 34He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ 35Jesus began to weep. 36So the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’ 37But some of them said, ‘Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?’

38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39Jesus 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.’ 40Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’ 41So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me. 42I 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.’ 43When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ 44The 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.’

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

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1 There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice
which is more than liberty.

2 There is plentiful redemption
through the blood that Christ has shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the head.

3 There is grace enough for thousands

Of new worlds as great as this;

There is room for fresh creations

In that upper home of bless

4 For the love of God is broader
than the measure of our mind;
and the heart of the eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

5 But we make his love too narrow

By false limits of our own;

And we magnify his strictness

With a zeal he will not own.

6 If our love were but more simple,
we should take him at his word;
and our lives would be illumined,
by the glory of the Lord.

*Frederick William Faber (1814-1863)*

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1. In the cross of Christ I glory,
towering o'er the wrecks of time;
all the light of sacred story
gathers round its head sublime.

2. When the woes of life o'ertake me,
hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
never shall the cross forsake me.
Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

3. When the sun of bliss is beaming
light and love upon my way,
from the cross the radiance streaming
adds more lustre to the day.

4. Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure,
by the cross are sanctified;
peace is there that knows no measure,
joys that through all time abide.

5. In the cross of Christ I glory,
towering o'er the wrecks of time;
all the light of sacred story
gathers round its head sublime.

*----*

*1 I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon the sons of men,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary
when Bethl'em's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.*

*2 I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted
and stays our sin and calms our lurking fear
and lifts the burden from the heavy laden;
for still the Saviour, Saviour of the world is here.*

*3 I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun will shine in splendour
when he the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is known.*

*4 I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when at his bidding every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when every heart with love and joy is filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
and myriad myriad human voices sing,
and earth to heav'n, and heav'n to earth, will answer,
'at last the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is King!'*

*---*

*1. To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life gate that all may go in.

Refrain:
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord,
let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father thru Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory, great things he hath done!

2. O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.
(Refrain)

3. Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
and great our rejoicing thru Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.
(Refrain)*