

The 5th Sunday of Lent

An invitation to join in praying together at home

Introduction

Today is the 5th Sunday of Lent and the beginning of the time we call “Passiontide”. Passiontide is the last two weeks of Lent when we focus more and more on the Passion and death of Jesus; when we accompany him in our thoughts and prayers on his way to Calvary.

Opening Hymn:

As the deer pants for the water
So my soul longs after You
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You

You alone are my strength, my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You

I want you more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy giver
And the apple of my eye

You're my friend and You are my brother
Even though you are a King
I love You more than any other
So much more than anything

(Martin Nystrom based on psalm 42)

WELCOME and CALL to WORSHIP

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.
Let us recognise his presence with us (*Pause*)
As God's people we have gathered.
Let us worship him together.

Loving God, we have come to worship you.
**Help us to pray to you in faith,
to sing your praise with gratitude,
and to listen to your word with eagerness;
through Christ our Lord. Amen**

Penitential Rite

God shows his love for us
in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Let us then show our love for him
by confessing our sins in penitence and faith. (*cf Romans 5.8*)

God our Father,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins...

For turning away from you,
and ignoring your 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 letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;
Father, forgive us: **save us and help us.**

**May the God of love
bring us back to himself,
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Acclamation

This is love, not that we loved God,
but that he loved us and sent his Son.

He is the sacrifice for our sins,
that we might live through him.

If God loves us so much
we ought to love one another.

If we love one another

God lives in us.

(cf *1 John 4.10-12*)

Collect

Most merciful God,
who by the death and resurrection of your
Son Jesus Christ
delivered and saved the world:
grant that by faith in him
who suffered on the cross
we may triumph in the power of his victory;
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen

**Today's Reading John 11:1-8, 17-4 NIV
The Death of Lazarus**

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. **2** (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.) **3** So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." **4** 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." **5** Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. **6** So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, **7** and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." **8** "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. **18** Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, **19** and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. **20** When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. **22** But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; **26** and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you."

29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. **31** When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

32 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."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. **34** "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. **39** "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odour, for he has been there four days."

40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. **42** I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" **44** The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

This bible story for today is a classic story, with classic drama.... But it is not just a story - it is an amazing testimony. Lazarus was really sick and the two sisters sent word to Jesus, who had just healed a man born blind, that their brother Lazarus was very sick and perhaps soon to die. Jesus got the message . . . and waited two days...

He didn't make preparations to go, he didn't send messages to say "We're on the way!" He just stayed there while Martha and Mary stood at the bedside and watched their beloved brother die!

Why did Jesus wait two days? The commentaries argue as to why Jesus waited two days, but none agree. The Bible says simply.... "so that the will of God may be done."

On the way, strong, assertive Martha came out to meet Jesus and full of grief and distress and maybe anger? said, "Jesus, if you would have been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus said: "He will rise again." And Martha responded: "I know he will rise again at the resurrection of the dead, **but what good** does that do us now?"

Then Jesus gave a word that has become one of the most treasured teachings of Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever lives and believes in me will *never die!*" Will *never die!*

Then he asked one of the most important questions found in the Bible, "Do you believe this, Martha?" What a question. Do you believe this? Do YOU believe this? That whoever lives and believes in me will *never die?* Martha answered, "I believe. I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God and that whoever lives and believes in you will never die."

Jesus was "deeply moved" as he approached Lazarus' tomb. His body *shuddered with sadness and he prayed* "My Father, you hear my prayers. You *always* hear my prayers. Grant my request so that these people may know that *you* have sent me." Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice: "Lazarus, come out." Lazarus came out of the grave, covered with linen wrappings. Jesus said, "Unbind him and let him go." (Lazarus came out wrapped in his grave clothes - showing that he is still subject to death - he is, if you like, revivified - brought back to **this** life - and he will die again to

this life- unlike Jesus whose grave clothes will be left neatly folded indicating that he has no further use of them.)

So what shall we say about this story?

First I want to focus on the phrase, “was deeply moved” or “shuddered with sadness.” We all know that experience. It is part of your life and mine. When the separation of death hits us - where the pain is so great, sometimes all your body and emotions can do is shudder with sadness..... that is the way it is for us. And for Jesus, the Son of God, too. “Surely he has born our griefs and shared our sufferings”

Finally there is *the challenging line from this Gospel:* “I am the resurrection and the life; The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die.” Do you believe this, Martha?” In response Martha made her incredible declaration of Faith “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

And I ask you that question this morning, one of the most important questions in your life -(Name)....., do you believe? Do you believe that Christ is the Son of the living God and that whoever lives and believes in him will never die? Do you believe?

Response

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled;
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn,
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

So let us learn how to serve,
and in our lives enthroned him;
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving.

Graham Kendrick.

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Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God
Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God, but made himself nothing.
Taking the form of a slave,
he was born in human likeness.
He humbled himself
and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.
Therefore God has raised him on high, and given him the name
above every name:
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

We pray for our needs and the needs of the world.

Lord, in your mercy...

Hear our prayer

And at the end.

**Merciful Father Accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

As our Saviour has taught us, so we pray:

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.

Hymn

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!

O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?

Is there trouble anywhere?

We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer!

Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share?

Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Jesus is our only refuge,
take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do your friends despise, forsake you?
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield you;
you will find a solace there.

The BLESSING and SENDING

**Almighty God, we thank you for
the gift of your holy word.**

**May it be a lantern to our feet,
a light upon our paths,
and a strength to our lives.**

**Take us and use us
to love and to serve all people
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Let us bless one another in the words of the grace:
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen**

**Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen**

Martha and Mary turned to Jesus: My prayers to Jesus today:

For my family...

For my friends...

For myself



