

SUNDAY 29 MARCH 2020 LENT 5 LAZARUS IS DEAD, BUT NOT FOR LONG

A Service of Worship while we are absent, one from the other.

Hello again everyone, this is the second week now where we are apart on a Sunday.
I pray during the week you have had opportunity to talk to others, see how they are going.
I hope you have been able get enough supplies and, I hope you are finding some peace.

Gathering Prayer

We gather again this week, by the Holy Spirit, across all time and space,
to hear again the Word of Grace to us;
to be reminded that we are God's people and, that we are dearly loved.
The Lord be with you.

And also with you. Amen.

Introductory Comments

As the world shrinks and draws us into our own worlds, our own towns, our own homes;
there is a safety amid the anxiety, and a closeness that we are to learn.
However, there are those for whom there is no centre, there are those displaced, misplaced and for them there
is no safety and yet there is a closeness they have learned.

Take some time to recall your thoughts and feelings through this week ...

Prayer of Lament (From Psalm 130)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading!

If you, O LORD, if you took our faults and wrong actions into account,
Lord, who could stand before you?

**But in you there is a deep well of forgiveness,
so that you may be held in holy awe.**

I wait for you, O LORD, I wait with deep longing,
and in your word I stand, waiting in hope.

My deep longing for the Lord

**is more than those who watch for the morning,
more than those who wait for an end to the night.**

Song: Be still and know that I am God (author unknown) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zN0XfOTC8U>

Be still and know that I am God,

(click on this link to listen to the song)

Be still and know that I am God, (rpt)

I am the Lord that healeth thee,

I am the Lord that healeth thee, (rpt)

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust,

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust, (rpt)

Read: The Gospel of John 11.1-45 ... read this aloud, to yourself or who is with you.

This is the third of the great Sagas in John's gospel that we read in this middle part of Lent. Over the past
weeks, we have met Jesus and the woman at the well; the healing of the man born blind and, now we meet
Mary and Martha as they weep over the death of their brother Lazarus.

Listen and feel the movement through this story.

What word or phrase resonates with me?

What sensations do I notice in my body?

What is mine to do?

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A Sleep that does not lead to Death.

Well, we have been saying for a while we need a rest, to slow down, maybe even stop. Some of us may have even been praying for it.

The Lord says, "Come to me all who are labouring and struggling with heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." And when that rest is offered, sometimes it may not be as we expected.

Well, the world has been going at frenetic pace, crowded skies, crowded waterways, crowded streets, crowded lives, crowded thoughts, crowded ... We have, it seems, pushed it to its limits and now it is pushing back.

The world has been offered respite from this frantic pace of humans, and now it is healing.

The prophets have been singing for years, "Stop the world, I want to get off."

And now the world is stopping, we are panicking. Yet, maybe this is just the rest we need; to stay put, to stay at home, to find home again, to find those simple, uncomplicated ways of connecting and remembering; for we now have time ... time on our hands, time on our minds, time for our souls.

The mystics called this time *the Dark Night (time) of the Soul*, but it was also the time where the light of God alone could break in. Night is also when we sleep, sometimes the sleep is long and deep, other times, it is restless -and it is also the time when we dream.

I cannot help but be drawn to Jesus' opening response,

"³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, Lazarus whom you love is ill."

⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; ..."

And then we are reminded that love is stronger than death.

But, in the meantime

for contemplation and our prayer

Crisis doesn't just happen to individuals ... It happens to communities, particularly when a community shatters. When shattering events that create a crisis displace the ordinary until the suffering reaches the point of no return. We are bereft. Lost for words, we are unable to describe the extent of our suffering or even to make sense of what we know and believe. And so, the descent begins, and we are in free fall toward the centre of our being ... and there we find both our *confession* and our *hope*. Jesus said to the woman, from your belly, the centre of your being, shall flow rivers of living water. And to Lazarus Jesus flows tears of living love.

We cannot face large-scale crises as individuals; we cannot carry the pain of this reality on our own, nor can we only look out for ourselves. The pain is communal and so too must be the response.

Prayer for Our Community:

O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world.

Please add your own prayers and concerns ...

*Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking,
we offer these prayers in the holy name of God, Amen.*

The Lord's Prayer

We pray together as our concluding commitment.

God, you are always with us,

give us the grace to face together what we cannot and must not face alone. Amen.

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