



The Fourth Sunday of Lent 22nd March 2026

The raising of Lazarus – James Martin

In the name of the Father
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

HYMN

We sing the praise of Him who died,
Of Him who died upon the Cross;
The sinner's hope let men deride,
For this we count the world but loss.

Inscribed upon the Cross we see
In shining letters, God is love!
He bears our sins upon the tree,
He brings us mercy from above.

It makes the coward spirit brave,
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes its terror from the grave,
And gilds the bed of death with light:

The Cross: it takes our guilt away;
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day,
And sweetens every bitter cup.

The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love,
The sinner's refuge here below,
The angels' theme in heaven above.

Introduction to confession

Let us prepare ourselves to receive God's Word.

The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart God will not despise.
Let us come to the Lord, who is full of compassion,
and acknowledge our transgressions in penitence and faith.

We confess to you our selfishness and lack of love:
fill us with your Spirit.
Lord, have mercy.
We confess to you our fear and failure in sharing our faith:
fill us with your Spirit.
Christ, have mercy.
We confess to you our stubbornness and lack of trust:
fill us with your Spirit.
Lord, have mercy.

The Lord enrich you with his grace,
and nourish you with his blessing;
the Lord defend you in trouble and
keep you from all evil
the Lord accept your prayers
and absolve you from your offences, +
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. Amen.

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;
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. Let us pray.

The Collect for Lent

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
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 first Reading from Scripture Ezekiel 37 1-14

The Valley of Dry Bones

37 The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2 He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. 3 He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

4 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! 5 This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath] enter you, and you will come to life. 6 I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.'"

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

9 Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

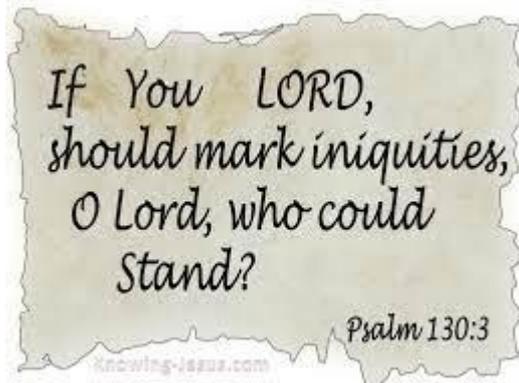
11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' 12 Therefore prophecy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13 Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your

graves and bring you up from them. 14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.”

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Psalm 130

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;
2 Lord, hear my voice.
Let your ears be attentive
to my cry for mercy.



3 If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
4 But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.
5 I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,
and in his word I put my hope.
6 I wait for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.

7 Israel, put your hope in the Lord,
for with the Lord is unfailing love
and with him is full redemption.
8 He himself will redeem Israel
from all their sins.

The second Reading from Scripture Romans 8. 6-11

⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

HYMN

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk,
Till traveling days are done.

The Gospel reading John 11. 1-45

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.
Blessed are those who have endured temptation;
they have stood the test and will receive the crown of life.
Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John
Glory be to thee O Lord

1 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?"

⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. ¹⁰ It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light." ¹¹ After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

¹² His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." ¹³ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

¹⁴ So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, ¹⁵ and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

¹⁶ Then Thomas (also known as Didymus^[a]) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."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^[b] 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 is the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to thee, O Christ

Reflection

On Wednesday this week (25th) the church will observe the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary; it is a Principal Feast Day of the church. This is the moment when the angel tells Mary that she is to be the mother of the Promised One. It is placed nine months before Christmas Day! This announcement did not come out of nothing, rather it was the culmination of prophecy, one of the 'golden threads' pointing to Jesus that run through the scriptures.

In the first book of the Bible, there is the story of Adam and Eve in the garden. So familiar I do not need to relate it, but note the words addressed to the serpent:

¹⁴ "Because you have done this, ...

¹⁵ ... I will put enmity

between you and the woman,

and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.” Genesis 3

These words are known as the ‘protoevangel’; the first hint that God is going to send someone who will do something about the broken relationship between God and man that Adam and Eve had brought upon themselves.

Whether we take the story as literal or mythical makes little difference. It addresses something of which we are all aware. That there is something ‘wrong’ or amiss with humankind and on into nature itself (recall that the earth was cursed for Adam’s disobedience). We have shifted from what God initially declared ‘good’ into something different – a state of ‘not good’. Yes, there is much good there is also much that is not. This dichotomy is termed ‘theodicy’, the goodness of God and the presence of evil. Some have called this the ‘mystery of evil.’

This ‘thread’ of promise develops through the scriptures becoming increasingly defined. The prophetic words became part of the self-understanding and expectation of the Jewish people. One was coming whom they came to describe as the Messiah, the Anointed One.

Every young woman must have wondered whether she might be the mother of the Messiah. We can see this in Mary’s song, the Magnificat which she sang after the angel’s visit. “*Behold all generations shall call me blessed*”, yes indeed, all past generations and those to come.

But this event, this overshadowing and conception, nonetheless required Mary’s consent, her “yes”. “*Behold the handmaid of the Lord be it unto me according to thy word*”.

This is a pattern of something God wants to do in us and to which we must also give our consent, our welcome. Or put another way, something like what happened to Mary has to happen to us. The Divine Life was literally implanted in her, the Life of the Spirit is planted in us.

Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones shows us the ability and purpose of God to bring life out of death. The vision goes beyond national restoration to speak of God putting his Spirit within humankind. This never happened in the Old Testament, the Spirit would come upon someone for a purpose but not within. For example, King David would pray *Take not thy Holy Spirit from me*. Yet Paul, in his letter to the Romans, tells us ...*you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you*. What before would only ‘come upon’ is now within those who believe and receive Jesus the Christ (Christ and Messiah mean the same).

This Spirit of God came upon Jesus at his baptism and it was in the power of the Spirit that Jesus performed his many signs and wonders. He raised three people from death; Jarius’ daughter who had just died, the widow of Nain’s son who had been dead for a day and Lazarus who had been dead four days. This same Spirit will later raise Jesus to life.

The Christian faith has at its core the belief that in and through the life and death of Jesus, God did something that reversed the disobedience of Adam and has restored the world in its relationship to Godself. Do we see everything ‘fixed’? No, quite obviously not. But what we do see, or rather experience, is a New Creation in and through faith in Christ. We are called to be individually reconciled and restored. Deep stuff and not for a few words here!

In our New Testament reading Paul writes ... *If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you*.

The extraordinary and wonderful truth of the gospel, is that the Spirit of God that breathed life into Adam so he became a 'living being' and life into the bones in Ezekiel' vision and life into the womb of Mary and life into a man dead four days, is the same Spirit given to us who believe. No wonder Paul could write *...nothing can separate us from the love of God.*

Like Mary, we conceive¹ the life of God and like physical conception the life of Christ is planted in us and like natural gestation it begins its growth.

Like Mary what is required of us is the giving (continually) of ourselves in a 'yes' and the receiving by faith (always and afresh) the life Jesus came to give us.

Might we also take to ourselves the words of Dag Hammarskjöld as we begin this week.

"For all that has been, Thanks. To all that shall be, Yes."

Lord Jesus, as we enter this week into the solemnity of Passiontide, we carry with us the distress of our world. Come to our aid now, in the midst of the global spread of this disease that we may experience you healing love. Good Lord, stay by our side in this time of uncertainty and sorrow and grant us your peace. Good Lord deliver us. Amen

¹ literal meaning *take effectively, take to oneself, take in and hold OED*

Intercessions

We pray to the Lord for courage to give up other things
and to give ourselves to him this Lent.

Give your Church the courage
to give up her preoccupation with herself
and to give more time to your mission in the world.
We pray for ...
May the blood and water flowing from the side of Jesus
bring forgiveness to your people
and help us to face the cost of proclaiming salvation.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give your world the courage
to give up war, bitterness and hatred,
and to seek peace.
We pray for ...
May the shoulders of the risen Jesus,
once scourged by soldiers,
bear the burden of political and military conflict in our world.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage to give up quarrels, strife and jealousy
in our families, neighbourhoods and communities.
We pray for ...
May the presence of the risen Jesus,
his body once broken and now made whole,

bring peace and direction as we live with one another.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage
to give up our selfishness as we live for others,
and to give time, care and comfort to the sick.
We pray for ...
May the wounded hands of Jesus bring his healing touch,
and the light of his presence fill their rooms.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer.

Give us the courage to give up our fear of death
and to rejoice with those who have died in faith.
Especially we hold ... in our minds.
May the feet of the risen Lord Jesus, once nailed to the cross,
walk alongside the dying and bereaved in their agony,
and walk with us and all your Church
through death to the gate of glory.
Lord, meet us in the silence,
give us strength and hear our prayer,
here and in eternity. Amen.

God our Father,
in your love and goodness
you have taught us to come close to you in penitence
with prayer, fasting and generosity;
accept our Lenten discipline,
and when we fall by our weakness,
raise us up by your unfailing mercy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your
Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

God, who from the death of sin raised you to new life in Christ,
keep you from falling and set you in the presence of his glory;
And the blessing of God almighty, +
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMN

1 The royal banners forward go;
The cross shows forth redemption's flow,
Where He, by whom our flesh was made,
Our ransom in His flesh has paid:

4 On whose hard arms, so widely flung,
The weight of this world's ransom hung,
The price of humankind to pay
And spoil the spoiler of his prey.

2 Where deep for us the spear was dyed,
Life's torrent rushing from His side,
To wash us in the precious flood
Where flowed the water and the blood.

3 Fulfilled is all that David told
In sure prophetic song of old.
That God the nations' king should be
And reign in triumph from the tree.

5 O Tree of beauty, tree most fair,
Ordained those holy limbs to bear:
Gone is thy shame, each crimsoned bough
Proclaims the King of Glory now.

6 To Thee, eternal Three in One,
Let homage meet by all be done;
As by the cross Thou dost restore,
So guide and keep us evermore.

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