

dead for four days.’⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, ‘Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?’⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, ‘Father, I thank you for having heard me.’⁴² I 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.’⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’⁴⁴ The 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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The Fifth Sunday in Lent – Sunday 26 March 2023

- Exodus 17.1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5.1-11; John 4.5-42

John 11: 1-45 includes two noteworthy things that may be overlooked. First, Jesus was compassionate. He felt deeply for those affected and acted decisively to help. Second, Jesus interacted with a woman who recognised that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, as Peter did in an exchange with Jesus reported in the synoptic gospels. A study of the earliest available Greek text and pertinent early literature by Elizabeth Schrader indicated that the woman was not Martha, but actually Mary Magdalene, the first witness to Jesus’ resurrection (Harvard Theological Review, 110, 3, July 2017, pp. 360-392; reviewed and summarised by Diana Butler Bass at <https://dianabutlerbass.substack.com/p/mary-the-tower>).

- Let’s pray for God’s gift of compassion and give thanks for His conferment of equal standing on all people.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Korea, the Daehan Seong Gong Hoe.

Text: Ken Willett St John’s Cathedral, Brisbane © Anglican Board of Mission, 2023

Reflection

A classic gathered community of relatives and friends, grieving together, illuminates the humanity that binds us all. Grieving and sorrowing also disturbs our perspective – brokenness and blame, belief and benevolence. Jesus knowingly enters into the middle of this scene. Martha rushes out of the gathered community, to meet Jesus, with both admonishment and certain faith. Ever practical and purposeful, she even alerts Jesus later of the smell of death in the tomb. Mary, caught in her grief, came when knowingly secure of a welcome. She falls at Jesus’ feet again, having once washed them with respect and gentle love, an intuitive offering from heart and soul. Her faith mixes with raw grief, blame and belief. The crowd follows, conversing through their weeping, in both wonder and criticism. Jesus understood the human pain and anguish, spoke with gentle directness, and was himself immersed in his very real sorrow. He wept, releasing more than silent tears. Weeping releases the complicated anguish where sorrow for self and other meet, a physical expression of the aching soul. Even in the midst of this rawness, Jesus’ prayer reminded all who listened, that they were known and heard by God. In both their grieving and their questioning, they were held and heard. He showed how to be immersed in the human reality, and know the encompassing presence of God’s Spirit. He offered solace and gracious understanding. Like Lazarus, those who listened too, were unbound and let go. © Rev Anne Hewitt 21/03/2023



HOLY INNOCENTS ANGLICAN CHURCH BELAIR

Readings - Sunday 26 March – Fifth Sunday in Lent

Sentence

‘I am the resurrection and the life,’ says the Lord; ‘whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.’

Collect

Life-giving God,
your Son came into the world
to free us all from sin and death:
breathe upon us with the power of your Spirit,
that we may be raised to new life in Christ,
and serve you in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading: Ezekiel 37.1-14

¹ The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ² He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³ He said to me, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’ I answered, ‘O Lord God, you know.’ ⁴ Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.’ ⁷ So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’ ¹⁰ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. ¹¹ Then he said to me, ‘Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.” ¹² Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I

open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.'

For the word of the Lord, *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 130

¹ Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord:
Lord, hear my voice;

² O let your ears consider well:
the voice of my supplication.

³ If you, Lord, should note what we do wrong:
who then, O Lord, could stand?

⁴ But there is forgiveness with you:
so that you shall be feared.

⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits for him:
and in his word is my hope.

⁶ My soul looks for the Lord:
more than watchmen for the morning,
more, I say, than watchmen for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy:
and with him is ample redemption.

⁸ He will redeem Israel:
from the multitude of their sins.

Second Reading: Romans 8.6-11

⁶ To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹ But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ 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.

For the word of the Lord, *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel Reading: John 11.1-45

¹ Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' ⁴ But 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.' ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after 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.' ⁸ The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' ⁹ Jesus 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. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' ¹² The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' ¹⁶ Thomas, 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. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' ²³ Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' ²⁴ Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' ²⁵ Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' ²⁷ She 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.' ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ The 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. ³² When 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.' ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So 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 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus 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