

# Service for the Passion Sunday

**Sunday 29 March 2020**

- All the Bible readings come from the *New Revised Standard Version*.
- The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration have been included at the end rather than in situ because many following the service will be in isolation and unable to celebrate the sacrament.
- The hymns are Youtube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.

**HYMN 1 I will sing the wondrous story** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

## **The welcome**

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

**All Amen.**

The Lord be with you

**All And also with you.**

## **The Preparation**

**All Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,  
that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name;  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
with all your soul, with all your mind,  
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

**All Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

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 confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to live in love and peace.

**All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour  
in thought and word and deed,  
through negligence, through weakness,  
through our own deliberate fault.  
We are truly sorry  
and repent of all our sins.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life  
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

Almighty God,  
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,  
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,  
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,  
and keep you in life eternal;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**All Amen.**

There is no Gloria during Lent

## The Collect for Passion Sunday

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.

**All Amen.**

## First reading

A reading from the prophecy of Ezekiel

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. He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.'

Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 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.' 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. 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.

Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, 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.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. 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." Therefore prophesy, 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. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 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.' *Ezekiel 37:1-14*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## **Second reading**

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 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, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 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.

But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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. *Romans 8:6-11*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Breathe on me breath of God** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

## Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

**All    Glory to you O Lord.**

A certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' 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.'

Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' 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. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

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

Now Jesus had not yet come to the village but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 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. 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.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?' Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 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 dead for four days.' Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone.

Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. 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.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' 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.' Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. *John 11:1-45*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## **Sermon**

All Christians want eternal life. Jesus said that eternal life comes as a result of 'dying to self'. Indeed, he said a great many parables about dying in order to gain eternal life. How do we go about it? The passages here give us all the clues we need. Let's start with the long reading from John's Gospel.

The story begins by introducing to us Lazarus (in Hebrew 'Eliezer' which means 'God will help'). He resides in Bethany (in Hebrew 'Beit Aniah' which means the 'House of the Poor'). These Hebrew names are not coincidental.

In the Jewish mindset, a human spirit stayed inside or beside its host body for three days after a person died. Only when the flesh had started to decompose did the

spirit leave and go to a misty, murky place the Jews called *Sheol*. It was a kind of purgatory in which the soul experienced nothing and waited for the day of judgement.

In this story, Jesus waited three days. He was determined to show a great miracle rather than a small one. Bringing Lazarus back to life meant more than reanimating a corpse. He was bringing a human spirit back from Sheol into its former host. He was also reversing bodily decay. Incidentally, this last detail explains why Martha says, 'There is a stench!'—she is rubbing in the impossibility of what Jesus is about to attempt. To summarise, then, Jesus in this story is not only doing a miracle. He's doing a *great* miracle. He's causing resurrection even though it's clearly impossible.

We now look at the magnificent reading from Ezekiel. It's describing a different kind of coming back to life. This time, though, it's not a single body coming to life: he's talking about the whole people of God. And he's not talking about a body in merely physical terms. He's talking in spiritual terms. What *is* he saying?

Ezekiel says that God enacts resurrection in two separate but interconnected stages. That mechanism is bound up in the repeated phrase, 'Prophecy to ...' which, in context, means invoking the word of God. We first seek eternal life by prophesying to bones — it's resurrection of a physical kind. Only then does Ezekiel prophesy to the breath, which is a reference to the Spirit of God entering the newly resuscitated bones. The spiritual resurrection relies on the prior physical resurrection.

What do these passages mean to us today, as Christians we seek eternal life?

First, if we are to receive eternal life, we must drag our souls back from living in an unprofitable existence in 'the world' and bring it back into our soul. It's not small a miracle but a great miracle for many of us have lived in the world for a long time. Our spiritual lives stink. It's a profound resurrection as we pass from death to life.

Second, we are to follow the advice of Ezekiel. We must prophesy to our lives, which means invoking the word of God (presumably through prayer). It comes in two stages. We first *behave* in a Christlike way: we aim for a resurrection of what we do, so both works and actions. Only when the external structure is taking an appropriate spiritual shape can the Holy Spirit enter the soul of a reforming believer.

We are Christians. We want to be the people of God so we each need a great miracle. We need to reshape our lives into something that looks very much like Jesus. The Holy Spirit always finds it easier to enter a life that is already Christ-shaped.

A final thought. Christian growth is a process rather than a one-off even. All of us therefore need to go through this resurrection, doing so repeatedly.

**A few related Bible verses**

Blessed are the poor in Spirit [those who have space in their souls for the Spirit] for they will see God. *Matthew 5:3*

John the Baptist said, 'I must grow smaller [in a spiritual sense] and he must grow bigger'. *John 3:30*

**Prayers of intercession**

Let us bring to the Father our prayers of intercession through Christ who gave himself for the life of the world.

For forgiveness for the many times we have denied Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

For grace to seek out those habits of sin which mean spiritual death, and by prayer and self-discipline to overcome them.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

For Christian people, that through the suffering of disunity there may grow a rich union in Christ.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

For those who make laws, interpret them, and administer them, that our common life may be ordered in justice and mercy.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

For those who still make Jerusalem a battleground.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

For those who have the courage and honesty to work openly for justice and peace.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

For those in the darkness and agony of isolation,

that they may find support and encouragement.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

For those who, weighed down with hardship, failure, or sorrow,  
feel that God is far from them,

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

For those who are tempted to give up the way of the cross.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

That we, with those who have died in faith, may find mercy in the day of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All Hear our prayer.**

**Leader** Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**

## **The peace**

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us access to his grace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you:

**All And also with you.**

**HYMN 3 Lift high the Cross** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

**HYMN 4 And can it be** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

# The Dismissal

Christ crucified draw you to himself,  
to find in him a sure ground for faith,  
a firm support for hope,  
and the assurance of sins forgiven.

And the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

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

# The Liturgy of the Sacrament

## Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right and just,  
our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For as the time of his passion and resurrection draws near  
the whole world is called to acknowledge his hidden majesty.

The power of the life-giving cross  
reveals the judgement that has come upon the world  
and the triumph of Christ crucified.

He is the victim who dies no more,  
the Lamb once slain, who lives for ever,  
our advocate in heaven to plead our cause,  
exalting us there to join with angels and archangels,  
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.  
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
Drink this, all of you;  
this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.  
Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died:**  
**Christ is risen:**  
**Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms

and bring us with St Barnabas and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All Amen.**

### The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All 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.**

### Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.  
Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.  
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.  
Eat and drink  
in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us. Amen.**

Communion is distributed.

## Prayer after Communion

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have taught us  
that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters  
we do also for you:  
give us the will to be the servant of others  
as you were the servant of all,  
and gave up your life and died for us,  
but are alive and reign, now and for ever.

**All    Amen**

**All    Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out  
in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.**