

The Grapevine

COVERING THE PARISHES OF SAFFRON WALDEN, WIMBISH,
DEBDEN, ASHDON AND HADSTOCK.

Fifth Sunday of Lent
29th March 2020

REFLECTIONS

'The mystery of God's love is not that he takes our pains away, but that he first wants to share them with us. Out of this divine solidarity comes new life.' Henri Nouwen

Jesus does not prevent Lazarus' death, sweeping in heroically as in the climax of a film. Lazarus dies, he is mourned, and he is buried. Jesus then comes into the raw pain and confusion of shock and grief. He dwells there and does not minimise the suffering of his friends. Even though he knows that Lazarus will soon be resurrected, he is so moved that he weeps alongside them. Indeed, it is his compassion that leads Jesus to action as he resurrects Lazarus.

As we draw near to the end of Lent, the cross comes clearer into view. Lazarus' death foreshadows Jesus' death, but by the same token, Lazarus' resurrection is a joyful anticipation of Jesus' own resurrection.

St Paul underlies that we will all receive the gift that Lazarus received. All believers are dwelling places of the Spirit of God who joins us to the Father, through the Son. This same Spirit raised Jesus from the dead lives in us, and we too will be resurrected.

Death does not have the final word. The words Jesus speaks are life and hope and he speaks the same words to us today.

Going deeper

The word *Bethany* translates as 'house of the poor'. Some scholars think it was the place where the poor, the sick and those in need lived, a sort of hospice outside of Jerusalem. What significance does it have that Jesus brings resurrection here?

I wonder...

"...new life starts in the dark. Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark." (Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*)
I wonder... where might God be bringing new life amidst the darkness?

PARISH DIARY

TODAY 29th March 2020

NO SERVICES

NEXT SUNDAY 5th April 2020

NO SERVICES

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Sun 29th	Morning: Psalm 130 & John 11.1-45 Evening: Psalm 30
Mon 30th	Morning: Psalm 73 & Hebrews 11.17-31 Evening: Psalm 26
Tue 31st	Morning: Psalm 35 & Hebrews 11.32-12.2 Evening: Psalm 61
Wed 1st	Morning: Psalm 55 & Hebrews 12.3-13 Evening: Psalm 62
Thurs 2nd	Morning: Psalm 40 & Hebrews 12.14-end Evening: Psalm 43
Fri 3rd	Morning: Psalm 22 & Hebrews 13.1-16 Evening: Psalm 31
Sat 4th	Morning: Psalm 23 & Hebrews 13.17-end Evening: Psalm 130

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; 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.

First Reading: *Romans 8.6-11*

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.

Gospel: *John 11.1-45*

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 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!' 37 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 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. And 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 and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.



See St Mary's church, SW, website at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org to find out more.



Please 'Like' our Facebook page so we reach more people! Click on the link on our website, or go to: www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In March please pray for:
Abbey Lane & Newport URC, incorporating the Methodist Church, Dame Bradbury's School

The family and friends of those who have died recently:
Irene Elliott

EVENTS

WITH APOLOGIES, PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS ALL EVENTS ARE SUSPENDED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

NEWS

Revd. Dr Caroline Curren has been appointed **TEAM VICAR**, with responsibility for Ashdon. *Barbara Marshall*

Due to the current circumstances, **THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS FOR A NEW TEAM RECTOR IS NOW PAUSED**. The vacancy will continue to be advertised on both the St Mary's website and the Diocesan website, though the interview process will take place at a later date, as soon as it is feasible.

CURATE'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

Our church doors are now closed for private prayer as well as for services. We've long known that the Church is the people and not the building, and so we now an opportunity to practice what we preach!

Each Sunday, the Saffron Walden and Villages Team Ministry intend to upload a pre-recorded service with musical accompaniment. You can find the link to these videos on the church website and you can also find on the 'Church At Home' website page many resources to help you draw near to God in this unusual time. Please also 'like' and check our 'Saint Mary's Church Saffron Walden' Facebook page where we are sharing encouraging verses from Scripture as well as prayers to help guide your intercessions.

For those who are unable to access online resources, we are offering a 'prayer and worship pack' that includes a prayer booklet from Lent through Holy Week to Easter, prayer cards, as well as a copy of the most recent Grapevine. If you know of anyone who would like to receive this or is in need of any practical help, please contact the Parish Office in the usual way.

Many thanks to all those who are working together in new ways to share God's light and hope. I am inspired by your hopefulness, good humour, and prayerfulness. May we continue to turn to God in prayer, even when we don't have the words, trusting that nothing 'will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8.38-39) Ours doors may be closed, but our hearts remain open.

This is the last time I will write to you before I go on maternity leave on the 1st April. Through the appropriate social distancing measures (!) I have received your gifts. Thank you ever so much for your extraordinary generosity, as well as for your prayers and best wishes. Sam and I are really looking forward to welcoming the new addition to our family and we can't wait to introduce the baby to their church family in due course.

With love and prayers,

Rachel

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love, for your name's sake. **Amen.**

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER DURING THE PERIOD OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

We have a team of church members who are ready to help by

- * Collecting essential shopping and medical supplies
- * Providing a regular friendly chat by phone

If you are self-isolating and would like some support or, if you would like to be part of the team who can help, please contact the Parish Office by telephone or email. *Judith Hasler*

PARISH OFFICE The Parish Office is now closed to visitors. Dawn is working from home and contactable by telephone and email as usual. You can view the church and parish room diaries and lots of other useful information on the church website.

CHURCH CLOSED DURING THE DAY Please note that St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden, will remain closed until further notice.

GIVING Members of the stewardship scheme may put their collection in the Parish Office postbox if they wish – please use your usual numbered envelope or a yellow gift aid envelope so that our treasurer can identify it to you. Thank you. *David Birchall*

THE TRANSITION PROJECT Whilst the Tuesday clinic is **CANCELLED**, on line support continues – *contact us* at www.transitionproject.co.uk

THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY BOX HOLDERS Please continue to hold on and await further instructions sometime in the future. Thank you for your co-operation. *Eunice Harris*

The April edition of the **PARISH NEWS** can be viewed online on our website www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org

COPY for next month's "**PARISH NEWS**" must be emailed to St Mary's Parish Office by Sunday 5th April. *Andy Colebrooke*

CARTOON BY DAVE WALKER



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