

Our Service Together

Lent 5 March 22nd 2026



Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's
holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to
you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us
our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his
kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire
with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalms Psalm 130 *We say the psalm aloud*

Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;
Lord, hear my voice; let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.
If you, Lord, were to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you, so that you shall be feared.
I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; in his word is my hope.
My soul waits for the Lord, more than the night watch for the morning,
more than the night watch for the morning.
O Israel, wait for the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy;
With him is plenteous redemption and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Scripture Reading Ezekiel 37.1-14

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. ²He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.' ⁴Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶I 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.'

⁷So 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. ⁸I 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. ⁹Then he said to me, 'Prophesy 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.' ¹⁰I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

¹¹Then 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." ¹²Therefore 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. ¹³And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I 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.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel John 11.1-45

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 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

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

The message has been sent, Lazarus is sick – that's it, no mention of how sick or of what ails him. What is Jesus to do, what are we supposed to do when we get such a message? Do we drop everything and run over? I am sure we look for more detail before taking action.

Whatever the illness was Mary felt Jesus needed to know 'the one he loved was ill'. Upon hearing Jesus determines '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.' Very interesting?!

Jesus' confidence in the outcome enables him to suggest to the disciples they take the long route and go to Bethany via Judea territory. But this suggestion is met with horror because the people of that area had declared if should enter the territory then they would stone him to death. To calm the fears, he says Lazarus is sleeping and when they got there Jesus would awaken him. However, the point of the statement is missed and Jesus has to declare, bluntly, Lazarus is dead. Okay, we say, but two minutes before Jesus declared the illness would not lead to death.

Ezekiel is presented with a vision of a valley filled with dry bones and at the sight of these God asks 'Mortal, can these bones live?' Ezekiel, in essence replies 'that's up to you Lord'. The bones are prophesied over, flesh is applied to the bones, the breath of life comes, and they live.

Jesus accepts that Lazarus, like all mortals, has died, is dead. However, he knows, as Ezekiel knew, that God is able to raise the dead at whatever stage of decay their mortal remains have succumbed to. Lazarus is dead, but he is not in such a place that death has a permanent hold and God can be glorified in this instance and bring Lazarus back from death.

Dead, but not dead, died but not beyond God's possible life giving action, what on earth is Jesus saying?

The core Jewish theology of the time held the view that all face a 'mortal' death, a physical death, but the 'spirit', the person themselves, remained held in the embrace of God – alive, but as it were asleep. At the end of all things, each and all would be woken, would be resurrected, the decay of the flesh reversed just as the valley of dry bones and face judgement. Resurrected to face judgment that would lead to either life after (initial) death or (complete) death after (initial) death.

Jesus' declaring that Lazarus illness would not lead to death but to the glory of God being revealed was indeed true, for there is illness that will lead to an (initial) death; it will kill you, and also illness that would lead to (complete) death. Bacteria and Viruses kill, but it Sin that leads to 'death'. This was not the time for judgement! Thus Jesus declares he is not come to judge but to offer the way to life.

On hearing the news of Lazarus, Jesus is confident that the illness may kill his friend, but it will not cause his death. Mary and Martha are rightly concerned for their brother, and Jesus of course could have made him better if he got there in time, but as marvellous at that would be, and is something we should at all times seek in prayer and through human capacity to see, it is not really to the glory of God.

'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.' For Ezekiel it was not the raising of some dried up old skeletons that was glorious but the 'resurrection' of the nation of Israel that would be a truly glorious thing. It is not that Lazarus is called back to life (he has not decayed at all in the tomb; there is no smell when it is opened) that is to the glory of God, but the sign that the 'Son of Man', through the death that is coming to him with defeat death completely and be glorified in that.

As we prepare ourselves for this coming Holy Week and for Resurrection Sunday, for Easter may we do so in the recognition of our mortality; something will get us in the end. But may we do so in the knowledge that God has been glorified in the 'Son of man' in his 'lifting up' and that the ultimate healing we all look too is assured. And more, might we be open to the power of the resurrection come to us in Jesus Christ, and him die to the power of sin and look to our raising in glory.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

As we journey through the remainder of Lent may we grow in faith, understanding and service.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Strengthen Michael and Fiona our Bishops and those who seek to serve you in this diocese. May they be filled with the Spirit and serve you as the first disciples. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for priests, preachers and theologians as they struggle to interpret the mystery of God to be relevant for each generation. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We Pray for the King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us into your peace. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them joy in your eternal kingdom. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. Amen.

The Collect

All: 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. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.