

**Order of Service – Website**  
**Avoch linked with Fortrose-Rosemarkie**  
**Meeting Jesus - Changed by Jesus**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent**  
**John 11**

**Call to Worship**

<sup>5</sup> *I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word do I hope.*

<sup>6</sup> *My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning:  
I say, more than they that watch for the morning.*

[Psalm 130 KJV; Public Domain]

Our opening hymn speaks of God's faithfulness and compassion across the changing seasons of our lives and God's presence with us to "cheer and to guide":

*"strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside"*

**MP 200 Great is thy faithfulness**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2ALBUtJymg>

**Prayer**

<sup>1</sup> *Out of the depths have I cried unto you, O Lord.*

<sup>2</sup> *Lord, hear my voice: let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.*

Lord at this time of pandemic we come into your presence

We seek your face and we seek to share our fears and concerns with you

Hear us we pray

We admit that we fail you; that we stumble and fall

We confess our sins

Hear us we pray

**SILENCE – CONFESSION**

<sup>3</sup> *If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*

<sup>4</sup> *But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared.*

**ABSOLUTION**

*"The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit;  
a broken and contrite heart God will not despise."*

We pray the prayer that Jesus taught us:

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.

## **Word of God – John 9 – “Meeting Jesus - Changed by Jesus”**

### ***Bible Readings - John 11:1-20***

Our theme this morning is Jesus' meeting with Lazarus. The words of our next hymn remind us of the role of God Father, Son and Holy Spirit in giving us life and life eternal.

*“Eternal Spirit, by whose breath; our souls are raised from sin and death”  
Before your throne we sinners bend; to us your saving grace extend.”*

### **CH4 483 Father of heaven whose love profound**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8M5WBuBKH38>

### ***Bible Readings - John 11:21-45***

### **Sermon – Martha and Mary come to deeper faith as they meet Jesus at tomb of Lazarus**

One of my former colleagues, a senior surgeon, was once in hospital himself ill to the point of death. He realised just how ill he had been when the experienced and hard-bitten ward sister shouted out from the reception desk as he left the hospital, “There goes Lazarus ...”

### **Jesus and his close friends**

In chapter 11 of the gospel John tells us that Jesus was close friends with Mary, Martha and Lazarus and that he was ill - *“Lord, behold, he whom you love is sick.”*

Lest we be in any doubt, verse 5 tells us *Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.* However, Jesus stayed in Bethany for two days.

*4 When Jesus heard that, he said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”*

We need to understand this in the light of the phrase “the sickness unto death”

*“the sin which results in death ... is no temporary misfortune, no passing ailment no sad accident but a deep-seated malady perpetually corroding and disintegrating human life - it is a sickness unto death” (Tasker)*

For Lazarus and for all of us this is the death from which Jesus' redemptive power needs to free us – “sickness unto death” may not be “spiritual death” but “physical death”.

We need to understand this in the light of the phrase “the glory of God”

The glory of God is mentioned in v4 and in v15 the idea is connected to the outcome “that you may believe” (meaning the disciples and those around Jesus.)

### **The Disciples and Jesus**

Jesus finally resolves to go to Bethany with his disciples.

*“Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.*

*12 Then said his disciples, “Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well.” 13 Howbeit Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.*

The disciples misunderstand Jesus' words about sleep and death.

*14 Then said Jesus unto them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent you may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him.”*

The disciples are conscious that Jesus' very life is at risk if he travels but he persists - given the deeper issues at stake. John allows a little humour in the darkness in the response of Thomas – “Oh well, if he *is* going to go - let's go and die with him ...”

### **Jesus & Martha - remarkable discussion**

Martha is the first of the two sisters to meet Jesus – a profound discussion ensues.

*20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died. 22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever you will ask of God, God will give it to you."*

Jesus probes her understanding in his response

*23 Jesus says unto her, "Your brother shall rise again." 24 Martha saith unto him, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."*

Martha's response shows faith and understanding but she is not yet aware of what is going to happen and who Jesus is. Tasker makes the comment about how bereavement (and, we could add, times of crisis), diminish our horizons:

"... in times of bereavement present sorrow dims the prospect of future bliss; and when the imagination is overwrought, death, not life is apt to seem the ultimate reality."

Jesus points Martha to a new way of thinking - "*I am the resurrection and the life*" this means that "*who believes in me, even though he dies, will live*"

In the context of what is going to happen to Lazarus these words have real force.

*25 Jesus said unto her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Believe you this?"*

John gives us insight into who Jesus is and the purpose of his coming.

*27 She says unto him, "Yea, Lord: I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."*

Martha may not have full insight - but she sees Jesus in a new light – "You are the Christ - the anointed one (Messiah) - the Son of God."

### **Jesus & Mary - "pathetic" (pathos-laden) conversation**

Martha tells Mary secretly that Jesus is here and Mary goes to Jesus.

*31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, "She goes unto the grave to weep there."*

*32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother had not died."*

Both sisters had confidence that Jesus could have saved Lazarus from death but were not fully aware of who Jesus is and God's purposes of glory through Jesus.

We're told that Jesus "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" and "Jesus wept".

Jesus emotion is not just sympathy with the grief of the sisters. His emotion is partly the encounter with death (his own death was imminent) it is partly sympathy and grief but it is also partly indignation (even anger). [The verb translated "groaned" could be put much more strongly.]

The American theologian B.B. Warfield wrote:

"... it is death that is the object of his wrath and behind him who has the power of death and whom he has come into the world to destroy. ... He has not only saved us from the evils which oppress us he has felt for and with us in our oppression and under the impulse of these feelings has wrought our redemption."

### **The stone - the symbol of the grave**

In what happens next Jesus is clearly going to interact with a dead person.

*39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone."*

*Martha, the sister of him that was dead, says unto him, "Lord, by this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days." 40 Jesus says unto her, "Said I not unto you, that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God?"*

Martha's response makes it clear - that she still thinks of Lazarus as dead and despite her earlier faith does not fully grasp what is happening

Jesus prayer is a prayer to God - but spoken for the benefit of others (expressly stated):

*41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.*

*42 And I knew that you hear me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that you have sent me."*

*43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth."*

### **Slide – Jesus calls Lazarus out**

Jesus calls out to a dead man called Lazarus. Lazarus comes out "bound" with the graveclothes – he probably hobbles out and is helped out of the grave-clothes - but he comes out alive to the waiting crowd. His exit brings a response ...

The story of Lazarus has echoed down through the centuries – modern-day ward sisters know about it - the colleague (the surgeon) mentioned earlier knows that he recovered from death's door. Lazarus, however, had walked through death's door and come back. Both the surgeon and Lazarus would look forward, through faith, a different kind of "rising from the dead". In John's language – this is "a sign" not a final resurrection – a "climactic sign" in the light of what is going to happen to Jesus.

### **Meeting Jesus - Changed by Jesus**

**Meeting Jesus** divides us into two camps - those who believe and those who don't!

Those who are **changed by Jesus** and those who resist.

Martha and Mary were pushed right to the edge in their experience to see God's glory revealed in Jesus through their brother's life – their insight and faith was stretched to breaking-point and beyond – but they were **changed by Jesus**.

We're told that of the Jewish friends and neighbours of Martha and Mary that on the one hand, "many believed" **changed by Jesus** and on the other, "some reported him to the Pharisees ..." and presumably they remained "unchanged."

So it was - so it is still ...

As we hear the account of Lazarus, how do we respond? – is our faith stretched, our horizons expanded - are **we** changed by Jesus?

## Response to the Word of God

Our hymn of response,

### MP 1183 Holy Spirit living breath of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nbMfLQd2P4>

### **Encouragement from the Bible**

<sup>5</sup> For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;  
but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

<sup>6</sup> For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

<sup>10</sup> And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin;  
but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

<sup>11</sup> But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you,  
he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies  
by his Spirit that dwells in you. [Romans 8 KJV; Public Domain]

### **Prayers for others**

Lord God we pray for all those in our community who are on their own and isolated

[... specific requests for our community]

Lord God we pray for those who minister to others in the present pandemic and especially  
health care workers and those who care for the sick and dying

[... specific requests for our community]

Lord God we pray for those who have loved ones who are ill or who have experienced  
bereavement in the present pandemic

[... specific requests for our community]

Lord God help us as church to maintain contact with one another even when we are  
physically apart

[... specific requests for our community]

Lord we pray for ourselves that your presence would strengthen us and transform our lives

[... specific requests for our ourselves]

In Christ's name we pray these things, AMEN

### **The Grace**

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and the love of God our Father,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

### MP Jesus is Lord the cry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLJFpxOcGKk>

### **Benediction**

<sup>7</sup> Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy,  
and with him is plenteous redemption. <sup>8</sup> And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Lord God help us to seek your redeeming purposes through Jesus Christ our saviour  
that in your deliverance we find mercy and grace, and, like Lazarus, your life-giving power;  
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,  
be with you all. AMEN.