



St. Benedict's and The Venerable Bede

Keeping in Touch with our Church Family

Sunday 29th March

Passion Sunday

Gracious Father,
You gave up your Son
out of love for the world:
Lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion
That we may know eternal peace
Through the shedding of our Saviour's blood
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Ezekiel and the Valley of dry bones

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 around 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. From *Ezekiel 37*

Jesus, Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

A certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love

is ill. 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 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 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 From *John 11*

A Reflection for Passion Sunday

It has been a difficult week. The order to suspend public services and all our community activities. To close churches even for private prayer and to rearrange baptisms and weddings has left me feeling a little like Ezekiel as he looked out over the valley of dry bones.

Bereft.

Martha and Mary must have felt like that when their brother Lazarus died. But we know that all that changed when Jesus arrived. Yes, Jesus grieves, he weeps, but then in the most spectacular way Jesus restores Lazarus' life.

News

The news of what happened spread like wildfire. Even reaching the ears of Caiaphas the High Priest. He is perplexed. Jesus' popularity was already a problem. He thinks about possible solutions: his words are some of the most famous in history " it is better for one man to die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed." John tells us that "From that day on they planned to put him to death." Caiaphas' words are strangely prophetic. Wiser than he could possibly have known.

The beginning of a journey

Today is Passion Sunday. We are on the threshold of the Easter journey. A journey that will take us through many emotions From Palm Sunday and the cries of adulation and expectation, through Jesus' teaching in the temple to the Last Suppers and his arrest. We will share the disciples' fear in the garden of Gethsemane, the tragedy of death and the wonder of resurrection. It's a journey that most of us have undertaken many times.

Hope

To stand at the foot of the cross, is to stand with Ezekiel in his valley of dry bones, to stand with all those who are perplexed and afraid as the Corona Virus changes so much, is to still to have hope. We can see that even in tragedy God is at work putting flesh and sinews on to the bleached bones and **that** breathing life into a lifeless body. What makes us brave enough to believe in that ? Perhaps Lazarus, the man who had two funerals. More than that Jesus, sins forgiven, hope restored, by the one man... who to use Caiaphas's words "died for the people" and rose again to the glory of God the Father.



Please remember those who have asked for our prayers

Sarah Stephenson, David Kingston, Lisa, Julia McCormick, Morgan, Michael Concannon, Carl Baker, Ann Aldridge, Heather Gent, Laura Jones, Jean, Joan, and Margaret Hatton

Those who have died recently and their families:

baby Felix Jones, Hazel Dooley, Barbara Richardson

Prayer during the Week

Passion Sunday:

For all who grieve for loved ones. (John 11:33)

Monday:

For those upset by cancelled celebrations and memorials.

Tuesday:

For those struggling to contain Covid 19.

Wednesday:

For all who are worried or anxious.

Thursday:

Thank God for faithful friends in our time of need.

Friday:

For those still being cared for in schools.

Saturday:

That everyone may face the coming days with courage and trust in the Father.

Prayer

Please let Paul know paulstbenedicts@gmail.com if there are any prayer concerns that you would like to be Included either in my private prayers or on "Keeping in Touch" .

Daily Worship

Don't forget that there are short booklets to help you in your daily prayers available on the Church of England website (www.churchofengland.org). Please join us in a circle of prayer at the time you normally attend worship at St Benedict's or the Ven Bede.

Keeping in touch

The Parish Office is closed. Maxine is working from home and is still working on our contact lists if you know people who we know would like to keep in touch with us. Please email Maxine office@stbenedictbiscop.org.uk especially if you think you have forgotten to send us your email address.