

Service, Sunday 29th March 2020 led by Rev Bruno Boldrini

Opening:

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

Prayer of Adoration and Confession:

Loving God, in the company of all your people we come to you; and your presence is joy to us. We come here on the first day of the week to meet with you and with each other, and to listen to your word for each one of us.

Lord we are ready to be transformed by the renewal of our minds into the people that you have created us to be. As we worship in the company of angels, surrounded by your saints and embraced by your love; let us give ourselves openly and freely as you give yourself to us in tenderness and love. Loving Father, Lord Jesus, Holy Spirit, we worship you, the one and eternal God.

Let us confess our sins:

God of justice and forgiveness, we are aware of our sinful desires and our tendency to put ourselves before you. We confess that we are weak and ungrateful for what we have and that in our own lives we do not always do what is right or turn away from what is wrong. We ask for your forgiveness, we claim your love and mercy and we ask for courage to make a new beginning. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

(silence)

Jesus said: "Your sins are forgiven", he also said "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.

Collect

Eternal God, we believe the good news of your mercy and love, and rejoice that we are forgiven and free. Receive us as your children, as brothers and sisters of Jesus, part of your new community of love, and give us strength to do you will today and always. Amen

Old Testament Reading:

Psalm 130

A Song of Ascents.

130 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!

² O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

³ If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,

O Lord, who could stand?

⁴ But with you there is forgiveness,

that you may be feared.

⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,

and in his word I hope;

⁶ my soul waits for the Lord

more than watchmen for the morning,

more than watchmen for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD!

For with the LORD there is steadfast love,

and with him is plentiful redemption.

⁸ And he will redeem Israel

from all his iniquities.

New Testament Reading:

John 11:1-27

11 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, ⁴ '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, ⁶after having heard that Lazarus^[a] was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judea again.' ⁸The disciples said to him, 'Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?' ⁹Jesus 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. ¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.' ¹¹After saying this, he told them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.' ¹²The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.' ¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. ¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.' ¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin,^[a] said to his fellow-disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him.'

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus^[a] had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles^[a] away, ¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' ²³Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' ²⁴Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' ²⁵Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life.^[b] Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' ²⁷She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah,^[a] the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

Address:

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.'

I want to focus on this key point, this strong point of hope that Jesus gives us today. In the Nicene Creed, at the end of it, we say that we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. That is how we close the Creed. Therefore, we

believe in the resurrection of the body and life eternal. This is very important because Jesus is pointing to the fact that death is not the end. Death is only a phase of life from life in this world to life eternal. So as Christians we should be encouraged by the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is God! And he is telling us that he is the resurrection. That if we believe in Him, we have eternal life. This should remove part of the sadness of the death of our loved ones. Yes, of course, we are going to be sad and miss them because they are no longer with us, here, in this life, in this world. But it is a great comfort to know that we will see them again. That death is not the final word. So, our sorrow will be alleviated in a way because we know that our separation from them is only temporary. And since we believe in Jesus who is the resurrection and the life, we must not fear death. Because we know that beyond this life...this life of sorrow, of pain, of grief...of happiness too, there is another life. A life eternal made of joy that we can start now when we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. He is the life because through Baptism, He gives a new spiritual life, the living water of the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Him. Therefore, Jesus is the resurrection and the life. He is the one who will receive anyone who believes in Him, into eternal life.

And Jesus asks Martha: "Do you believe this?" That is the question that Jesus asks us today, in these times of great trouble "Do you believe this?" Imagine Jesus saying to you "I am the resurrection and the life" and asking you now: "do you believe this?"

Well, the truth, the answer is found in our hearts. It's only there that we find it. If we believe in Him, in the power of his resurrection and the fact that He is the only true life, then we can rejoice in Him, through tears and sorrows of this life, we can rejoice in the fact that we have this personal relationship with our God who loves us so much. He loves us so much that He is ready to pick up that cross and to die on that cross for our sins.

After the raising of Lazarus, we read in the following verses that many believed in Him but others started planning the betrayal and execution of Jesus. Therefore, we must see that by raising Lazarus to life again, He is walking towards His own cross. The cross of our salvation. Amen

Prayers of Intercession:

In these difficult and unprecedented times, we bring our prayers to you, Lord, remembering that we are in the final part of Lent.

Our trust and hope lie in you, Lord God; hear our prayers and deliver us.

Be with all Christians who face suffering and persecution for their faith. We give thanks for the witness of their courage. May they show your love to their enemies in this time of crisis, and by that love, may they bring your light and hope in other people's lives.

We pray for all peoples who face suffering because of this virus affecting the whole world. Lord, help all the people affected by the virus, be with all those involved in the care of others, pharmacists, doctors, nurses, volunteers, public service officers and all those involved in the research for a vaccine.

Comfort the lonely; be their strength, their life and their joy.

Tend the dying and bless those who care for them.

Be near to those who are facing the loss of loved ones. Comfort them with your tenderness and compassion.

We adore you, o Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

In the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Benediction:

The blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen