

Church at home

East Leake Methodist Church 2021

Sit comfortably in a quiet place and prepare, start with a brief period of silence, turning your mind and spirit towards God. You may want to have a cross or candle in view as a focus.

Hymn Shine Jesus shine StF 59

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2zEjfCMCDI>

Opening Prayer

Almighty and all-loving God in awe and reverence we come to worship you; to proclaim your greatness; to acknowledge your power; to recognise your sovereignty; to declare your goodness.

Lord of all,

hear our prayer.

Compassionate and caring God with grateful hearts we come to praise you for your love that constantly surrounds us; for all the blessings of our lives; for the wonder of our world, for the hope of our faith in Christ. Lord of all, hear our prayer.

Merciful and forgiving God, in sorrow and shame we come before you -to confess our unworthiness of your goodness, to confess we have not loved You or one another as we should; to confess we have failed to appreciate your many gifts, and broken your commandments.

Lord of all,

hear our prayer.

Living and life-giving God, in faith and trust we come to petition you - to pray for ourselves, for one another, and for our world; to bring the concerns of daily life before you; to lift our loved ones into your presence; to commit the affairs of our world into Your hands.

Lord of all,

hear our prayer.

Lord of all we offer you this time of worship – our praise, our thanksgiving, our confession, our petition.

Lord of all,

hear our prayer.

Respond to us we pray - touch our hearts with your living presence and fill our lives with Your grace so that our love for you may grow. our faith be deepened, and our service strengthened.

Lord of all,

hear our prayer.

in the name of Christ.

Amen

Lords Prayer

Psalm 130

Reading Ezekiel 37:1-14

Hymn O breath of life StF 391

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3bsgoPjcg4> .

Reading John 11:1-45

Hymn Dem bones

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZo3VTMxwJA> (not in StF)

Address

Passion Sunday it does not seem as well known as the two Sundays which follow it – one thing was pointed out to me some years ago is that if you look at quickly it seems to say Pass-it-on Sunday. Surely that is something we should be doing everyday of our Christian Life, it signposts the way to Holy Week, it is part of the countdown to Good Friday then to Easter Day. However one of the events that, for me at least, is the account of Lazarus.

The story of Lazarus is the precursor of the Easter story of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is the tale of life after death, a concept that caused controversy even in the time of Jesus. Lazarus was obviously a friend of Jesus as mentioned in John 11:3 when Martha and Mary send a message to Jesus to tell him of Lazarus' illness. It was

the sort of message that would challenge us to hurry to the bedside of a dear friend. Yet John tells us that Jesus stayed where he was for a couple more days, in that situation you or I would feel guilty that we didn't go the moment we heard the news. Jesus told his disciples that what was to happen was so that God, ultimately he (Jesus), would be glorified. The disciples were mystified and later horrified when Jesus said that they should go to Bethany. The disciples knew that it was there in Judea that Jesus had been heading for a stoning, just a few days previously.

What was to follow would go on to cause more confusion when Jesus first tells them Lazarus was dead (well he had fallen asleep, a euphemism for death)(how did he know?) and he (Jesus) had to go to waken him. Of course the disciples took asleep literally and thought Jesus would wake up naturally. So, to deal with his stupid disciples, Jesus explains quite plainly that Lazarus is dead, for their sake they would be shown the power of God in action so they could truly believe. Convinced that Jesus was going to die on his return to the area Thomas encouraged the other disciples to go with him and likely die also.

After Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany we discover Lazarus had died 4 days previously. The family obviously were well liked and there were many people around who had come to bring condolences to the two sisters. Upon hearing that Jesus was coming Martha rushes to meet him, she was aware that if Jesus had been there then Lazarus wouldn't have died and even then whatever Jesus wanted to happen would. Jesus tries to reassure Martha by saying that Lazarus would rise again. Martha believing that one day God would resurrect his people on the Day of the Lord, recognises in her own mind this to be a fact. However Jesus was meaning more than that and says:

“I am the resurrection and the Life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this?”

Do you believe this all of you who are either hearing or reading this?

Martha believes this and then returns to the house to find her sister Mary. There follows a similar conversation between Mary and Jesus, but Mary weeps almost unconsolably in front of Jesus. As Jesus saw Mary and the other bereaved folk weeping he became quite angry, the Greek word used here literally means 'to snort like a warhorse'. He demands to know where Lazarus has been laid and seeing the tomb he wept. Some of the folk there recognised his compassion whilst others chuntered about his absence which meant Lazarus had died. Angry again Jesus demanded the stone rolled away from the tomb, Martha, knowing the usual situation, pointed out the usual smell of putrefication would be horrific, but Jesus insisted. God was to be glorified by what would follow, the prayer that Jesus offered came from the heart. The command for Lazarus to come out was immediately followed by Lazarus walking out still wrapped in his grave bindings. He was released from them and allowed to be free, many people, it is said, believed in Jesus from this point.

Life after death plays a big role within the Christian faith, the actual working out is down to faith. Each of us will have our own idea about what it will mean and how we will experience it. However it may come, whenever it may happen let us take comfort in the fact we will, as long as we believe, experience eternity in the presence of God and Jesus Christ our Lord. That is all that matters.

Intercessions

Lord Jesus Christ you gave of Yourself without counting the cost. offering even your own life for the life of the world. So now we pray for all those who seek to love You in return, however hesitant, partial, or imperfect their love might be. Inspire them through your love.

We pray for those new in their faith, still learning more of you, still uncertain perhaps of their commitment, still discovering more of your love
Keep their love always growing.

We pray for those established in their faith, facing the daily risk of growing complacent, stale, settled into a comfortable routine. Make their love ever fresh.
We pray for those whose faith has crumbled, no longer holding the trust they once held, no longer feeling you close by their sides, no longer seeking to follow Christ.
Renew their love

We pray for those who have never had faith; those consistently unmoved by the message of -the Gospel, those who resist its challenge despite themselves. and those who wilfully go against your will.
Kindle a love for you in their hearts.

We pray for those whose faith is costly, those who sacrifice time, money energy. security, health, and even life itself.
Reward their love.

And we pray for those who need something to put their faith in, the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the sick, the suffering, bereaved all those broken by the tragedies and crises of life.
May they experience the fullness of your love

Lord Jesus Christ, your love is for all whoever they may be. May it reach out then into every heart in every place, and may we be a part of that, learning to love you as you love us.

Amen.

Hymn Going home StF 734

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jv9Cc0vdOug>

Blessing

Gracious God
take this moment
this minute
this hour,
this day.

Take our lives and use them for your kingdom;
in the name of Christ

Amen