

Christ Church, Ipswich

Sunday 22nd March 2026

Family Worship for The Fifth Sunday in Lent

Hello, I hope you are well. For this the Fifth Sunday in Lent, our reading will be John 11:1-45, the story of Jesus raising Lazarus. Let us worship God together:

Call to worship – from Psalm 130

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits
and in his word I hope.

My soul waits for the Lord, more than those who watch for the morning.
More than those who watch for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord,
**for with the Lord there is steadfast love
and with him there is great power to save.**

O Israel, hope in the Lord
and trust in his holy name.

A gathering prayer

Loving God,
we thank you for sending us your Son, Jesus.
Help us to see that he shared this earthly life fully,
its joys and sorrows, triumphs and defeats, bliss and pain.
May we draw comfort from the knowledge
that he is with us in good times and bad,
and understands all our experiences.
Praise to you, O Christ. **Amen.**

A prayer of approach

Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus – with a passion.
They were as family to him.
He felt compassion in their time of sorrow.
He wasn't afraid to show his emotion.
People couldn't understand why he had to let Lazarus die.
But the best was yet to come.
Lord, be with us through our sorrows.
And show us the pathway to fullness of joy. **Amen.**

R&S 285 O for a thousand tongues to sing

1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace.

2 Jesus, the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace.

3 He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean,
his blood availed for me.

4 He speaks, and listening to his voice
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

5 Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosened tongues employ;
ye blind, behold your Saviour come;
and leap, ye lame, for joy!

6 My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of thy name.

Charles Wesley (1707-88)

A prayer of adoration

Amazing God, we truly can't take in
the fullness of your love for us.
We need time to wait on you,
and let you into our sorrows and joys.
Lord God, cause our hearts to sing
as we wait patiently on you,
and witness to your healing power.
Father, Son and Holy Spirit: **Amen.**

A prayer of confession and an assurance of forgiveness

God of grace,
there are times when we feel so far away from you:
when we are swamped by the depths of trouble;
when we are dried up, isolated, broken;
when we long for a peace we cannot find,
for a rest that will not come.
We wonder why you do not hear our cries for help.
In you, Lord, there is forgiveness.
And when we stop, and turn to ask for the forgiveness you promise,
we find it is already given.
When we silence our cries, we find you have heard us all along,
and your still, small voice speaks to us of steadfast love.

In your endless mercy, give us the grace to receive your forgiveness,
to embrace your love, and to live again in the light of your hope. **Amen.**

A prayer of thanksgiving

A sorrow shared is a sorrow halved.
We have seen the closeness of Lazarus and his sisters,
to each other and to you, Lord Jesus.
We thank you that, through you,
we too can have that shared experience.
Thank you that in our time of grief,
however long it takes, you are there.
Thank you that you can bring new life to us.
And thank you most of all for the gift of eternal life. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

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. 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.

Family Talk**GG 2 Be still, for the presence of the Lord**

1 Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the holy one, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found -
we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the holy one, is here.

2 Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:
how awesome is the sight -
our radiant king of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

3 Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place:
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace -
no work too hard for him,
in faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place.

David Evans (1956-) © Thank You Music Ltd.

The children go to Junior Church with our love and blessing

Gospel Reading

John 11:1-45

NT page 97

The Death of Lazarus

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, '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.'

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

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.'

Jesus Weeps

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?'

Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹Jesus 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.' ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' ⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴²I 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.' ⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' ⁴⁴The 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.'

The Plot to Kill Jesus

⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

Reflection*A moment for reflection***R&S 302 O Breathe of life, come sweeping through us**

1 O Breathe of life, come sweeping through us,
revive your church with life and power;
O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,
And fit your church to meet this hour.

2 O Wind of God, come, bend us, break us,
till humbly we confess our need;
then in your tenderness remake us,
revive, restore; for this we plead.

3 O Breath of love, come, breathe within us,
renewing thought and will and heart:
come, love of Christ, afresh to win us,
revive your church in every part.

Elizabeth Porter Head. (1850-1936)

Our prayers of intercession

Lord Jesus, we come to you today hearing that you are the resurrection and the life and yet so much of our world seems to be dying. We are surrounded by news of war. And so we pray for Ukraine; for the Middle East, especially Iran; and for many parts of Africa which don't often make the headlines. Lord, bring your peace.

We hear in the news about so many places where there is political unrest... Lord, bring your justice.

We know that much of your beautiful world has been spoiled by our actions. We cry out to you for a polluted world, where multi-nationals argue over the use of fossil fuels; where our supermarkets continue to use plastics; where floods and droughts cause endless problems and ruin livelihoods. Lord, bring your renewal.

Into our times of difficulty and sadness

Breathe new life and hope

Lord Jesus, you brought such joy to Mary and Martha as you raised Lazarus from the dead, but we know that people we know and love have died or are facing pain and illness right now. We remember all those in our community who have died recently, as well as those who are marking the anniversary of losing someone, especially naming... We pray for all those who are mourning their loss. Lord, come close to them in their sorrow, bring them the comfort of your love. Help us to know how to support them at this difficult time.

And Lord, we pray for all those who are sick, those awaiting a diagnosis or test results or a date for an operation... Lord, we pray that you will bring healing, wholeness and patience. We thank you for our health services and all who care and support those who are unwell. We pray for their families, that they will also know the support of friends and neighbours.

We pray for all those in the UK affected by the meningitis outbreak.

Into our times of difficulty and sadness

Breathe new life and hope

Lord Jesus, Mary and Martha were so lost in their grief when you first visited them. We pray for all those who are full of sadness, fear, anxiety or loneliness at this time. We pray for those who feel that no one cares for them. We remember those who face negativity at work or school, particularly those who are bullied. We pray for those for whom home is not a safe or happy place. Lord, so much trauma is hidden from us but known by you. We pray for relief and safe spaces where people can truly be heard and helped.

Into our times of difficulty and sadness

Breathe new life and hope

Lord Jesus, when you came to Mary and Martha, they asked you questions and came with accusations: 'Why weren't you here?', 'If you had been here all would have been well'. Sometimes we have so many questions about why bad and sad things are happening that we don't know where to begin. But, in the silence now, we have the time to bring our deepest, most heartfelt questions to you, knowing that you will hear us...

Lord, we are aware that you didn't answer their questions but, instead, you wept. You wept because you saw and understood their pain. You wept because death was not what your Father had originally planned. You wept because you care deeply for all our hurts and sorrows. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you care. Even when you may feel miles away and distant, you are still caring, still weeping, still loving. Thank you, Lord.

Into our times of difficulty and sadness

Breathe new life and hope

Lord Jesus, at the tomb of Lazarus you did the unexpected, you brought him back to life. Thank you for your promise that you are the resurrection and the life. Help us to hold on tightly to this promise, especially when things are hard. Enable us to look around and see the signs of new life that you bring: in nature, as the flowers begin to bloom and the birds sing. In our community, such as: (*mention here any new initiatives or signs of new life in your area*). In our church life: (*are there new things starting up you can pray for?*). And in our families and fellowship: Lord, we rejoice at births, successes in school (no matter how small), new jobs, healing, birthdays, weddings and engagements... Lord, forgive us that we are often so focussed on the difficulties of life that we forget to thank you for the joys. Help us this week to look for where you are at work in our lives, to close each day with gratitude for the good things you have done. Nothing is too small for us to be grateful for.

Into our times of difficulty and sadness

Breathe new life and hope

Ultimately Lord, we thank you for the greatest gift of all: your resurrection. Lord, we know that you bring us new life. We are assured by your word that death is not the end and we have eternal life with you to look forward to. Send us out from here ready to take the good news into every place we go this week. And help us to live our earthly lives in the joy of what is to come.

Into our times of difficulty and sadness

Breathe new life and hope

Amen

GG 30 There is a Redeemer

There is a redeemer,
Jesus, God's own Son,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One.

*Thank you, O my Father,
for giving us your Son,
and leaving your Spirit
till the work on Earth is done.*

Jesus, my Redeemer,
name above all names,
precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O, for sinners slain.

When I stand in glory,
I will see His face,
and there I'll serve my King forever
in that holy place.

Melody Green

A sending out prayer

Lord, be with us on our journey of life.
As we travel with you in the coming days,
may we share your love and compassion
with those we meet whose path is hard.
Transform us, and transform them, with your life-giving love. **Amen**

The Blessing

And may the blessing of God,
Creator, Christ, and Comforter,
go with us and all whom we love.
Now and forever, Amen.

The Grace

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