

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 3 November 2024 - All Saints

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Isaiah 25.6-9; Psalm 24.1-6; Revelation 21.1-6a; John 11.32-44

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by the Revd Valerie Kilner, Permission To Officiate (Retired), Somersham and Ramsey**

Imagine actually being there, with those folks around Lazarus' tomb!

Even four days after his death, many people would have been with Martha and Mary, supporting them in their grief. There would have been weeping and wailing. And there would have been tension – anger even. Anger at death itself and anger perhaps with Jesus. Where was he? Why had he not come yet?

When he does arrive it's too late to do anything. And he is also upset, weeping. Jesus knows all about the pain and questioning that surround bereavement. He is alongside us too as we grieve over the deaths of those we know and love. Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary were his close friends.

There is no doubt that Lazarus was dead. He had been in a tomb for four days. Jewish mysticism taught that a deceased person's spirit remained around the body for up to three days after death before departing. On the fourth day, the spirit left the body and there was no hope for life - without a miracle.

So, what would our reaction have been when Lazarus walked out of the tomb, his rotting corpse healed, his body full of life again? Certainly, Jesus had performed a genuine, we might say incredible, unbelievable miracle. But if we had witnessed it with our own eyes then we would have had to believe!

Those there at the time who had come to understand that Jesus had been sent from God would have had their beliefs confirmed and strengthened. Others would have felt even more disturbed and threatened by this Jesus. If we were to read on, we would find that some of the observers went to the Pharisees to tell them what had happened – and a meeting of the Sanhedrin was convened. Then plotting to remove Jesus began in earnest.

For us today who believe in Jesus this miracle confirms that he is the son of God - the life-giver – the way, the truth, and the life. He has power and authority over creation, even over death.

All this took place not long before Jesus' own death – his execution. Following that his friends and followers had to mourn in private and in fear for their own lives. Perhaps they recalled this miracle when Jesus returned to life after three days in his tomb!

Lazarus, of course, lived only to die again. Like us he was human, a descendant of the first human, Adam, and, as St. Paul writes: *in Adam all die*. But St. Paul is not speaking only of physical death but of spiritual death – being cut off from God, alienated from him. It is, he says, in and through Jesus, that we are brought back to God, to live again. *'For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.'*

I am reminded of a prayer of confession that may be used in our worship. It begins: *Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour.* We acknowledge those things in our lives which are not of God, which separate us from him, and state that we wish to change. As we ask to be forgiven – for our relationship with God to be restored - the prayer concludes: *For the sake of your son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive all that is past, and grant that we may serve you in newness of life to the glory of your name. Amen.* As our sin is forgiven, our damaged relationship with God is restored. We have newness of life.

Jesus took all our sins on himself as, on the cross, he died the death we deserve. But he overcame death with life that cannot be destroyed which he gives to us as we believe and his Spirit lives in us! The same Holy Spirit that was given to the first believers on that day of Pentecost to enable them to continue the work of Jesus on earth – to live as Jesus, for Jesus.

St. Paul writes *to the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia*. He calls all those who believe in Jesus 'saints'. The term meant they had a 'likeness of nature with the Lord'. They were like Jesus - holy, sanctified by the presence of the Holy Spirit in them because they trusted him.

Today is the nearest Sunday to All Saints' Day on November 1<sup>st</sup> – a day to celebrate with and give thanks for all those who have placed their trust in Jesus, past and present! All believers are saints. We are saints!

Lazarus was brought back to life by Jesus. We heard that he came out of the tomb with his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face. *'Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."* Lazarus was not free to be fully alive until that happened.

One aspect of what we are doing in our prayers of confession is wanting to be free of those 'graveclothes' in our lives that prevent us from being fully alive to God – fully like Jesus - so that the Holy Spirit can be seen in action in all we say and do.

Those saints of old from whom we learn so much were those who were able to throw off more of those 'graveclothes' than others so that their lives were more Jesus-like as the Holy Spirit empowered them.

Let us pray that we may be freed from any 'graveclothes' that are hindering us, so that the Holy Spirit can work in us and make us fully alive. May we too become more like Jesus –

serving him in newness of life – alive with his life in our world today, generous and visible people of Jesus Christ! Amen.

### ***Ways to Engage all Generations***

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder how you would have reacted to Lazarus being alive again if you had been there.
- I wonder what living ‘in newness of life’ means for you.
- I wonder which saints, past or present, have inspired you - and why.

### ***Suggested intercessions***

Jesus said: I am the way, the truth, and the life  
Lord, we thank you for all those who have walked in your way,  
believed in your truth and lived your life, especially those who have inspired us.  
Help us and all who follow Jesus today to be fully alive to your will for our lives  
and to have the courage to live it so that others may come to see you at work in us.  
Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Jesus said: I am the light of the world  
Lord, as we look of our world we see so much darkness:  
places in the news and those that are overlooked  
where lives are being shattered by conflict, destruction and brutality,  
areas where food is scarce because of floods or drought.  
We long for your light for those pursuing warfare,  
for those suffering as a consequence,  
and for those who do not know where their next meal is coming from.  
May there be a true seeking after peace and justice  
and after the well-being of all people –  
regardless of the cost to those who are responsible for these tragedies.  
Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Jesus said: I am the good shepherd  
Lord, you are compassionate and caring. As we think of our families and friends,  
we ask you to help us to be compassionate and caring too.  
Bring calmness to times when relationships are strained  
and the strength to forgive when we are hurt by the words or actions of others.  
Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Jesus said: I am the resurrection and the life  
Lord, in your victory over death we find hope.  
We ask for hope for those who suffer in body mind or spirit:  
those weighed down by ill health,  
those weighed down by worry,  
those weighed down by fear,  
those weighed down by sadness.  
And we ask for your blessing on all who give of themselves in caring for them and seeking  
their wellbeing.  
Lord in your mercy: hear our prayer

Jesus said: I will be with you always  
As we give thanks for those whose lives have encouraged and inspired us on our spiritual  
journeys we pray for ourselves.  
Thanks be to thee, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits thou hast won for us,  
for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for us.  
O most merciful Redeemer, Friend, and Brother,  
may we know thee more clearly,  
love thee more dearly,  
and follow thee more nearly for ever and ever.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

### **Suggested hymns/songs**

For all the saints  
Holy, holy, holy  
O welcome all you noble saints of old  
Let saints on earth in concert sing  
All for Jesus  
Thou art the way, by thee alone  
May the mind of Christ my Saviour

### **Activities to accompany the service:**

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children,  
then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources  
may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.com/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/> (weekly@  
lectionary resource)