



**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 22 MARCH 2026 – Fifth Sunday of Lent**

**COLLECT**

Most merciful God,  
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ  
delivered and saved the world:  
grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross  
we may triumph in the power of his victory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Psalm 130.**

- 1 Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;  
Lord, hear my voice; ♦  
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.
- 2 If you, Lord, were to mark what is done amiss, ♦  
O Lord, who could stand?
- 3 But there is forgiveness with you, ♦  
so that you shall be feared.
- 4 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; ♦  
in his word is my hope.
- 5 My soul waits for the Lord,  
more than the night watch for the morning, ♦  
more than the night watch for the morning.
- 6 O Israel, wait for the Lord, ♦  
for with the Lord there is mercy;
- 7 With him is plenteous redemption ♦  
and he shall redeem Israel from all their sins.

**A reading from the letter to the Romans, chapter 8, verses 6-11.**

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

***At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:***

The second reading is John, chapter 11, verses 1-45.

***and then at the end:***

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God.**

***For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel.***

Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.

**Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.**

I am the light of the world, says the Lord,  
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

**Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 11, verses 1-45.

**Glory to you O Lord**

***And then at the end:***

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, 'Lord, he whom you love is ill.' 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.' Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

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

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 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 Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' 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. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

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.' And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 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. 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 for 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.

## ***A Reflection from Hannah***

Love... and tears. The account of the raising of Lazarus is unusually long and unusually detailed in a very episodic way. There is theology and symbolism (as is characteristic of John), but we also get a very straightforward, heart-wrenching love story, with a breath-taking miracle to end it. Three siblings- Mary, Martha and Lazarus are loved by Jesus, and they love him back. The words *agape* and *philia* are used- preferential love which seeks the welfare of another. The disciples so far have only been called disciples... but here is mutual friendship- a friendship of equals.

And that, to some extent, explains the tears. The whole story is drenched in tears- the two sisters are weeping when Jesus arrives. We know Mary and Martha already- most particularly from that little interlude in Luke's gospel where Martha is doing all the work and finds herself exasperated by Mary, who is sat at Christ's feet. Those same character traits come out here- it's Martha who runs out first, ever practical, ever organising, her gut reaction is to shout 'if you were here, he wouldn't have died'. Mary, who has to be drawn out, says the same thing to Jesus. And then at the tomb, the practical, proud Martha doesn't want to roll the stone away because of the stench. She doesn't want her friend Jesus to smell death and decay. That seems to her a bit undignified.

In spite of Martha's worries about the smell, Jesus stands at the open door and says 'come out.' And Lazarus does- grave clothes and all ...

As Easter comes into view, of course we notice the resonances this story has with the greatest moment in history. The dead are brought back to life and that it is Jesus who does it. But it's not quite the same- for Lazarus, yes, he lived again, but he would eventually die again- a second time, with no come back. What is still to come- the work that at this point Jesus had yet to do- is so much more, infinitely more, than the raising of Lazarus. Jesus will go through death, so we may be raised to life eternal.

Christ- in love, with tears- says 'come out' to all of us. For all of us there are places that are dead and decaying and of which we are ashamed (like Martha was ashamed of the smell)- it is Jesus who calls us out of our own personal tombs and into the shining light of day. It is Jesus who says 'don't be ruled by shame, don't be afraid and hide from me- because in me is life that is yours to grasp'. So as we head to Palm Sunday, and then Holy Week- the quintessential time of love and tears- may we be brave to pray for God to roll away the stones of our hearts, to bring into the light the things that diminish us and that we bury, and in doing so, to bring healing, forgiveness, wholeness, life, love.