

Passion Sunday 29 March 2020

A very warm welcome to you all on this Passion Sunday. Another week has gone by and things have dramatically changed again. It's only two weeks ago since we had a full Eucharistic service in the Cathedral. So much has changed during those two weeks. Today we, by that I mean me, on behalf of the Liverpool Cathedral community, are outside Liverpool Cathedral offering you this small act of worship. We will begin with a prayer then I will read the reflection written by the Canon Theologian, Leslie Francis. Leslie is in self isolation back in his home in North Wales.

Within the Reflection the Gospel assigned for today will be read. I will end this service with some prayers. You are then encouraged to do our activity provided by Yvonne Pearson our Education Officer which you can find on the website prayforliverpool.org under the section resources and then under the tab worship.

So a moment of quiet as we give thanks for our NHS and as we remember all who are sick or have died through Corona Virus.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen

Loving God

We come to you this morning

As a country and world facing fear, sadness and gratitude.

Come to us now as we worship you in spirit and in truth. Amen

Today's 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.

Our IMAGE for you to reflect upon is :

A PAIR OF SPECTACLES



There is a lot going on in the world right now. The coronavirus pandemic gives us much to think about. How do you see things? How do we at Liverpool Cathedral see things? How we see things is shaped by the lenses through which we view the world. So what shapes your lenses? Who made the glasses, the spectacles through which you view the world?

Here in Liverpool Cathedral our glasses, the spectacles through which we view the world, are clearly shaped by the Christian tradition, specifically by the Anglican tradition. And in that Anglican tradition three things are of particular importance.

The first is the rhythm of the Church's year. Right now we are in Lent. Today is the fifth Sunday of Lent, also known as Passion Sunday. Passion is one of those words that have shifted their meaning over time. The Latin root of passion means suffering. On Passion Sunday we steel ourselves ready for walking the path of the cross with Jesus. We steel ourselves for the suffering of Good Friday.

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The second is the powerful body of texts brought together in the Christian Bible. Sunday by Sunday, day by day, we read those texts in the Cathedral and gradually they colour the way in which we see the world around us. Today, Passion Sunday in the Church's year, we are invited to read aloud the narrative of Lazarus' death as related in John's Gospel. I invite you now to listen very carefully as the narrative unfolds. I wonder just how much this narrative may colour the way in which you see the world around us today?

READING John 11:1-45

1 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.'

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.'

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?'

38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. 39 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.' 40 Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' 41 So 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.'

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

John's narrative of the death of Lazarus is indeed a powerful narrative. We have placed it on our website for today. You may want to read it again and to reflect deeply on the way in which the narrative unfolds. That is a job for each one of us to do in our own way. But I will highlight just a few points.

- The narrative begins when Lazarus was taken ill - sounds familiar?
- Lazarus was special to Jesus, someone whom Jesus really loves - sounds familiar?
- Jesus does not jump into action to change things; he stays put - sounds familiar?
- Lazarus dies. Jesus speaks plainly 'Lazarus is dead'
- Jesus shares the grief of Lazarus' family. John Speaks plainly 'Jesus wept'.
- Jesus consoles Lazarus' family with those now famous words: I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live . Sounds familiar.
- When Jesus reaches Lazarus' tomb, he says 'Take away the stone'. Lazarus lives on. Sounds familiar.

You can see why Liverpool Cathedral reads aloud this narrative on Passion Sunday. We take that narrative to heart. We take that narrative with us now as we steel ourselves ready for walking the path of the cross with Jesus. That narrative of the death of Lazarus does not lessen the pain of Good Friday, but it does assure us that Good Friday is not the

end of the journey. Rather it is the gateway to Easter Sunday. So we take that narrative with us, too, as we walk the precarious and uncharted path on which our sights today are focusing across Liverpool, across the UK, and across the world, as the global pandemic confronts us.

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The third is the context in which, throughout the rhythm of the Church's year, the sacred texts are read, proclaimed, and interpreted. They are read, proclaimed and interpreted in the context of the Christian Eucharistic community. Here in Liverpool Cathedral, Sunday by Sunday, day by day, in that Eucharistic community we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again. Today we may be locked out of the Cathedral, but we are conscious that we remain part of the great Eucharistic community, over which Christ himself presides, and in which we are united with all Christ's people across time and space. Against this great Eucharistic community nothing can prevail, even coronavirus.

Let us pray

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you taught us to love our neighbour,
and to care for those in need

as if we were caring for you.
In this time of anxiety, give us strength
to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick,
and to assure the isolated
of our love, and your love,
for your name's sake. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

The Blessing

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us
that what we do for the least of our brothers and sisters
we do also for you:
give us the will to be the servant of others
as you were the servant of all,
and gave up your life and died for us,
but are alive and reign, now and for ever.
And the Blessing of God almighty,
The Father the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with you all evermore.

Amen

Worship Activity

How we see things is shaped by the lenses through which we view the world. So what shapes your lenses? Who made the glasses, the spectacles through which you view the world?" This is the question posed in this week's reflection and to help you consider it, here are some ideas to make glasses at home. Channel your inner Elton John or Dame Edna for inspiration!

- Make a range of different shaped frames for your glasses: hearts, stars, animal eyes. There are plenty of printable templates available online, or have a go and design your own.
- See what happens when you use different colours for the lenses. Use cellophane from packaging or colour on clear plastic with felt tipped pens for the same effect. Sweet wrappers also work well!
- Add shapes or materials to unused or broken spectacle frames; feathers, flowers, pompoms.
- Design a glasses case or holder for someone in your family.

We are blessed to have the sense of sight with which to see the world. Here are some activities thinking about this most precious of senses.

- Make an eye spy game listing things for your family to find in your home or garden.
- How many things can you see in a particular place that- start with the same letter; are blue/yellow/green; are smaller than your hand; larger than your head;
- Make a target game and see how accurately you can land in the centre. Now do this covering up one eye. Does your score change?

Prayer

Dear God, thank You for this day!

Thank You for the birds and the animals, the flowers and the trees, the lakes and the streams, and the sun that rises and sets over them each day. Thank You for creating everything we see! Thank You for the life we

live, and for making each person different. Thank You for Jesus, who died for us so that we can go to heaven one day just for believing in Him.

In Jesus' Name,

Amen.