

Sunday church service.

[In place of Sunday worship 29 March 2020, CofS Garvald and Morham linked with Haddington West Church a shorter version is provided for use in the privacy of our own homes to which we are currently consigned; not meant for speed reading but as a help for being before God in the Spirit and in truth, in prayer and contemplation; may God bless us, together with all who call on Him]

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Blessed be the name of the Lord now and evermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting the Lord's name be praised! Ps.113, 2-3

The **Psalm** for the 5th Sunday in Lent is **130**; with its words we pray:

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! O Lord, hear my voice!

Let your eyes be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy!

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope;

my soul waits for the LORD more than watchmen for the morning,

more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love,

and with him is plentiful redemption.

And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

The Scripture lessons are

- Ezekiel 37, 1-14 (a vision of God restoring hope by giving life (Christ!) through the Spirit)

- John 11, 1-45 (s. sermon on verse 25)

- Romans 8, 6-11 (on life in the Spirit)

Jn.11, 25

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?'"

Some things are easier to believe than others. It is easier, for instance, to believe what I see with my own eyes than it is to believe what someone tells me. It is easier to believe that what we do must be right than it is to believe that we must do what is right. It is easier to believe that I should have what I want than to believe that I should not. It is easier to believe where there is proof than to believe where there is none.

However, instinctively we suspect that not everything that is easier to believe is therefore necessarily truer, nor that it is always best to trust what is easiest to believe. Such instinct surely has merit.

But what about things that are not just hard but *very* hard to believe? Such is the case for Martha and for all who hear what Jesus says to her. Now Jesus is aware of how hard it is, so he asks expressly: *“Do you believe this?”* Because Martha might hear, might even believe in some way, but might not come to trust. So Jesus makes a point of asking. Does Martha *trust* what she has just been told even as it stands in utter contrast to the way things are and have turned out?

Lazarus her brother had died, and Jesus had arrived too late to save him. Things have gone the way they shouldn't have – in a sense inevitably, and irredeemably. Some might ask: Don't they have a habit to? What did you expect? Don't they ultimately always? Still Jesus asks: Does Martha trust what she is asked to believe? If she does, given that what she is asked to believe is true (!) she has a most glorious hope that with its light overcomes all darkness. But is it true? Or to ask differently: Can Martha, or anyone else for that matter, trust it?

The answer lies not in her, as it does not lie in any of us. It is not a matter of having to find that trust in herself, to bring herself to a place where she believes something that by the mere sound of it seems unbelievable. The answer lies not in the one spoken to but in him who speaks. Which is why Jesus starts by saying who he is.

WHO is he who speaks? WHO is it that asks us to believe? The One saying: *“I am the resurrection and the life.”* The One WHO has risen from the dead and WHO in contrast to all that takes life and all that loses it claims to bring life and give it to all who believe.

Dear friend, did Jesus who followed up his words to Martha by raising Lazarus from the dead not then die himself, carrying on the cross the sins of the world, and rise from the dead 3 days after by the power of God? And shall not all, then, who trust his word also find them to be true?

Jesus wanted Martha to know WHO was there for her, WHO saw her sorrow and helplessness and burden and would carry it. He wanted her to know that he was her hope WHO would in no wise fail her, the hope too of the one who lay in his grave and for whom it seemed no hope was left. And what he wanted *her* to know so that she would trust, he wants *you* to know so that you too should trust. The hope she was shown should be yours too.

Hear what he says: *“Set your troubled hearts at rest. Trust in God always; trust also in me.”* (Jn.14, 1)

AMEN

“Lord, help us afresh to hear that you are our LORD and will not fail us, and give us grace, always and in all things to trust your word. You are our hope, in you we have nothing to fear; help us to live by your Spirit who dwells within us; for the praise and glory of your name. AMEN”

Take time to **pray**, bring everything that is on your heart before God, use the Lord's Prayer for guidance.

A hymn

O for a thousand tongues, to sing my great Redeemers' praise,
the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace!

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.

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

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

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

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

- Charles Wesley

*O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvellous for me.
but I have calmed and quietened my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.
O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore. -Ps.131*

Blessing:

**The guarding of the God of life be on you,
The guarding of the loving Christ be on you,**

**The guarding of the Holy Spirit be on you,
Every day and night,
To aid you and enfold you,
Each day, each night.**

AMEN