



TETHERED  
TO GOD:  
I CHOOSE LOVE...

*Worship in Times of Isolation*  
*Come Forth*

Centre for  
Music, Liturgy & the Arts



## Preparing for worship

*You may wish to find a comfortable space and light a candle to remember the presence of Christ this day. If you are worshipping with others you are encouraged to share the various parts of worship and read them aloud.*

*This week, even as we worship in isolation, we remain connected in faith and in love as the Body of Christ, gathered together, despite not being physically present with one another.*

*In the Old Testament sometimes the word translated as “hope” is also the word “cord”. Hope connects us with God, in the same way that a cord connects one to another. With time and intention the cord or connection is strengthened.*

*Interestingly, this form of hope is most common in the book of Job; perhaps, a reminder of the hope that Job has in God and the strength that this offers.*

*Perhaps now, our tethering to God and the interconnectedness with one another is more important than ever. We are deeply woven together and held by the love of God. It is this tethering that enables us to choose love, even in times of fear. It calls us to love our neighbour, to find ways to connect with one another, in times of social distancing. This day as we worship, may we remember that we connected to God, to one another and may we hear God’s call to love always.*

## Call to Worship

We are breath. We are spirit.      God breathe in us.

We are flesh. We are heart.

God, enflame us,

encircle us,

embrace us.

## Come As You Are

[Click here](#) to listen to Come As You Are. Alternatively, if this song is familiar to you, you may wish to sing too.

Scripture Reading: *Psalm 130*

*Lent allows us to speak with honesty about the harshest face of life. This season allows us to grieve, to cry out our anguish, to look at the painful side of life and to seek God in whom we trust and hope.*

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.

Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications!

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,

Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with you,  
so that you may be revered.

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 is great power to redeem.

It is he who will redeem Israel

from all its iniquities.

Prayer of Confession and Hope

Loving God,

Do not let us fall into fear and anxiety,  
to give ourselves over to chaos or despair.

Place in us the trust of the psalmist,  
that we, too, can declare your steadfast love,  
and be sure that a new dawning will come.

In our time of frailty and with unsure hearts we pray. Amen.

God is ever-present, guiding, comforting and holding us.  
God's love is steadfast and sure.  
Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

### *Bridge Over Troubled Water*

[Click here](#) to listen to *Bridge Over Troubled Water*.

### Scripture Reading: John 11:1-45

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.'

### Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

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.'

### Jesus Weeps

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?'

#### Jesus Raises Lazarus to Life

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.'

#### The Plot to Kill Jesus

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

The gospel of Christ, light of the world.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### Reflection on Scripture

This is perhaps one of the most intimate stories about Jesus. He loves this family – Mary, Martha and their brother, Lazarus (notice that Lazarus is named by his relationship to Mary and Martha rather than the other way around which we would normally see. This is perhaps an indicator that these sisters were really important in the Johannine community to which this was first written.) When it says Jesus *loved* Martha, Mary and Lazarus – it is not talking about *agape* love – the kind of self-sacrificing love that Jesus teaches and lives out. This is *phileo* love – the kind of love between friends, between family, the deep feeling, emotions, affections. This is Jesus at his most intimate – Jesus amongst his dearest of friends.

There are complex statements all throughout this story, including Martha's brave declaration of faith, "I believe that you are the Messiah" which aligns itself with similar declarations by Peter and Thomas. I want to focus on one simple statement. Jesus says to Martha, "*I am the resurrection and the life*". This is one of the I Am statements.

- *I am the bread of life* *John 6:35, 48, 512.*
- *I am the light of the world* *John 8:12; 9:53.*
- *I am the door of the sheep* *John 10:7, 94.*
- *I am the good shepherd* *John 10:11, 145.*
- *I am the resurrection and the life* *John 11:256.*
- *I am the way, the truth, and the life* *John 14:67.*
- *I am the true vine* *John 15:1*

These statements are so important not just in revealing who Jesus was but who Jesus *is*. These statements are present tense – they are not Jesus was the bread of life. Jesus was the resurrection and the life. They are offered to us – they are given to us now. These are the promises of God for us. They are personal invitations to know Christ. We are invited to put our names into the statements...

- *I am Margaret's bread of life*
- *I am Tim's light*
- *I am Hannah's door*
- *I am Henry's good shepherd*
- *I am Victoria's resurrection and the life.*
- *I am Geoff's way, the truth, and the life*
- *I am William's true vine*

So, what does the offer of being the resurrection and life look like for us? It is essential to the Christian life that we believe in a God who transforms death to new life, who counters hatred with love, who hopes when all signs are that hope is gone and the way is impossible. Still today, there are many tombs and grave clothes of death and destruction that bind us – be they war, hatred, fear, prejudice, poverty, systemic abuse, oppression. God calls us out of these. "Lazarus, come out!", Jesus called. Lazarus came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. "Unbind him, and let him go."

I am the resurrection and the life is that promise that we too can be unbound. We too can be transformed and live into a new reality. But, there is still more to this story. Jesus is amongst friends – the beloved. This story is for us too. Not just on a collective level but on the most intimate level. Jesus is our resurrection and life. We too live bound by all kind of things:

- *Bound by death, grief and loss, pain and suffering*
- *Bound by anxiety and apprehension*
- *Bound by labels and assumptions*
- *Bound by what others think of us or of their expectations*
- *Bound by a fear of the future or bound by anger over the past*
- *Bound by a fear that we are unloved or unloveable*
- *Bound by self-doubt, marginalisation, loneliness*
- *Bound by the fear of death or losing someone we love.*

To us, Jesus whispers, “I am the resurrection and the life”. Jesus invites us to be unbound, released, let go, from all that holds us, all that entombs us. Even in this time of fear and anxiety, when we are restricted in our physical choices in our daily lives, still we can make choices that liberate us and call us to hope and new life.

Questions for consideration:

- *What is it that binds you? How might you be able to release this?*
- *What is it that binds us as a community? How are we bound by COVID-19, the coronavirus, and how might find liberation as our actions are feeling restricted?*
- *As Jesus calls Lazarus to come forth, hear too the call for us to step forth into the hope offered to each one of us. What hope can we offer each other at this time? Is there a way to share this through a phone call, a message, a shared recipe, recalling a favourite movie or memories together?*

Lazarus

[Click here](#) to listen to Malcolm Gordon’s invitation to “come forth”

## Offering

*All that we are, and all that we have is first a gift from God. Our offering to God is from the fullness of all we have received. You may wish to consider how you can use the gifts God has given to you at this time: gifts of kindness and compassion, gifts of skills and knowledge, gifts of money and time, gifts of love and connection. Let us give of our offering with grateful hearts.*

## Prayers of the People

*You may wish to spend time thinking about what prayers you share for the world, the community, the church and people you know and love.*

Holy God, this day our hearts ache for the suffering we see in the world and in our own community.

We pray for those who have lost opportunities and are grieving the cancellation of events – weddings, birthdays, family gatherings, holidays – that have been sources of hope and joy.

We pray for those who have lost work and business and face times of uncertainty.

We pray for those who are frightened and anxious. Be our light in this time of darkness and remind us that the light always shines.

We pray for paramedics, nurses, doctors and all who work in the medical field. Grant them health, courage, and compassion.

We pray for leaders on every level who make decisions that impact the lives of others. We especially pray for the leaders of the nations. Grant them wisdom.

We pray for all those who mourn: for those who have lost loved ones.

Liberate us from our fear and help us to act in love, this day and every day. Comfort us in our fragility and strengthen our tethering to you.

And now with the confidence of the children of God we join the world in the prayer that unites us in Christ:

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.  
Save us in the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power  
and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.

### *How Can I Keep From Singing?*

This 19<sup>th</sup> Century hymn has brought comfort to generations through times of turmoil. [Click here](#) to listen to this new version.

### A Blessing

May you be tethered to God in times of uncertainty,  
may you be tethered to one another – the people of God in every time  
and every space.  
May you be surrounded by love,  
and know the peace of God, that surpasses all understanding. Amen.