

Sermon Sunday 29th March 2020

Psalm 130 and John 11: 1 to 45

Good Morning to you all. Let us Pray. 'Open our hearts to you and your word Lord. Amen.'

Today's sermon is based on Psalm 130 and John 11:1 verses 1 to 45. I am sure that when you look at the reading from John you will immediately recognise it; Jesus raising Lazarus, but I want to start with Psalm 130. It is a Psalm that assures us all of the Lord's forgiveness for our sins when we confess them to Him in prayer.

The psalmist is writing in the depths of despair and he is crying out to the Lord IN VERSE 2 'O LORD HEAR MY VOICE.' Despair makes us humans feel isolated and very distant from God but it is at times like this when we need God most. In the grip of the coronavirus epidemic I wonder how many people feel pity, despair, alone, angry just to mention a few human reactions. As one over 70, not for any medical reason I hasten to add, I have been advised to stay at home in self isolation which hurts because I can't do the things I usually do weekly, Church, Cathedral, Hospice, visit family and friends and so on. I have felt this and all the emotions I spoke about earlier but I have overcome them by every morning and evening by prayer or putting it plainly talking to God. I start always with thanks for the day and God's creation and the things He gives me despite what is happening around me. This takes me out of despair to a feeling of hope when I can carry on my worship and prayer for the situation and people, with God. This is the same as the psalmist turning to God his and yours and mine our one true saviour.

God does not keep a list of our sins but His forgiveness is always there, all we have to do is talk to Him and when He forgives He

forgives and it is this forgiveness which removes the wall we have put up between us and God taking us from despair, like the psalmist, to our proper relationship with God and His Son Jesus Christ.

Turning to the Reading from John 11: 1 to 45; Jesus and Lazarus. As I said at the beginning you will immediately recognise the account.

There is a story that Saint Francis once got up to preach, looked around him at the expectant faces and said 'God has not given me any words to say to you' and promptly blessed the people and sat down. The account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead is so brilliant that any commentary on it seems like gilding the lily.

However, there are some very significant points in the account; the first and foremost being that Jesus is trying to make the point to His disciples and the Jews about who He is, The Son of God not just someone going around performing miracles.

In verse 35 we are told that Jesus wept; was this for His friend Lazarus or for the Jews unbelief? I suspect it was both. However, the strongest reason for these tears for me is summed up in verses 39 and 40. 'BUT LORD SAID MARTHA THE SISTER OF THE DEAD MAN BY THIS TIME THERE IS A BAD ODOUR FOR HE HAS BEEN THERE FOUR DAYS. THEN JESUS SAID DID I NOT TELL YOU THAT IF YOU BELIEVED YOU WOULD SEE THE GLORY OF GOD.' For me it is all about belief in Jesus Christ and God His father, the message Jesus is making to all at the grave; God raised Lazarus through His Son Jesus Christ and that is a pointer of who Jesus is and what is to come.

Obviously, the similarity between Lazarus and Jesus coming back to life is there. However, the difference is that Lazarus' life is the restoration of a mortal or earthly life whereas Jesus' resurrection is a spiritual resurrection; His life was raised with the power of endless life and forgiveness of sin for all who believe and resurrection on the

last day. Jesus will come again and those of us who hear His cry or shout on the last day will be saved and be part of His resurrection. Lazarus' resurrection is merely a sign or a pale imitation of what is to come.

Jesus knows by going to Lazarus and his grave he is placing himself in danger from the Jews; look at the next Chapter which records how they start plotting to take Jesus' life. However, Jesus knows that He has to do return to Judea if He is to fulfil His work on earth, culminating in the joy of Easter, an unselfish act for all. There is a modern parallel with the coronavirus epidemic. Many front health workers and other emergency services are putting their lives daily at risk in doing their jobs unselfishly. A Priest in Italy this week suffering from the virus gave up his respirator so that someone else could have it and live. A selfless act and one of many that there have been in these difficult times.

So, the message I want to put over in these difficult times is one of hope, the love of God and eternal life through His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father hold us and our families in your protecting arms during this difficult time. Help each one of us to give and not count the cost to help others in this difficult time by action and prayer. God bless you and your families. Amen.

Brian Jones