

Message

We are afraid of all sorts of things – of loud noises, of lightning and dogs. We fear making a fool of ourselves, or losing control, or being helpless. We're afraid for our parents, our children and our friends. Some of these are anxieties and some are real fears which could have a big effect. Fears place restrictions around us –this week we find ourselves with restricted movement as we fear for our health and NHS and the vulnerable.

Jesus is across the Jordan because of fear – the Jewish authorities fear his message and, in their fear, they resort to violence. The disciples are afraid of going back to Judea; they're afraid what might happen to Jesus and that he might land them in trouble too. Imagine their dismay when Jesus says "Let's go back now"! But Jesus allays the fears of the disciples. He reminds them that he is the Light: reminds them they need to trust him. The disciples take courage from Jesus. Thomas loyally says "OK – let's go too."

Then there's this message from Martha and Mary, you don't have to read too much between the lines to know they are afraid, afraid for Lazarus and for their future too. Where is Jesus when life seems to be falling apart? Yet they wouldn't want to endanger their friend, so they leave it to him to decide what to do. They too place their trust in Jesus.

There are all sorts of practical solutions and people we can call when we have troubles. Telling our fear isn't easy – but there is an old adage: trouble shared is trouble halved. I wonder, do we turn to our friends – do our friends turn to us? We are just a phone call away and we have immediate contact. Like Mary and Martha, we have comfort too, of knowing we can turn to Jesus, we can trust our fears to him and despite what we might feel, Jesus is present with us.

Martha takes action, not only does she send for Jesus, she runs out of the house to meet him. You can almost hear the regret in her voice, the reproach, disappointment even, the "if only..." like she could turn back the clock. The discrepancy between what happened and what she intended when she sent for Jesus. We've all probably been there and said or thought "if only..."

But far from fear, beyond regret, this is a story of hope. Martha has expectations. She has hope. You can tell by the way she goes to meet Jesus – that even now maybe there is something Jesus can do, that she hasn't sent in vain. She believes God can transform

the situation. And she has faith in Jesus. This belief, as he reminds her, brings life. The climax of the story is a transformation beyond Martha's expectations as the glory of God is seen and the power of Jesus to rescue and liberate is revealed.

This is a story of comfort too; Jesus' concern and presence brings Mary relief as she kneels at Jesus' feet. Her words echo Martha's "if only..." but sound much more like a statement of belief. As we ache for God to intervene, there is hope and there is comfort.

Last Sunday evening across the world candles were lit and put in windows as a sign of light and life, of Jesus. Prayers were said for one another, for courage and hope.

Even though we are afraid we can be resolute, knowing the comfort of being together in this and of Jesus present in our concerns.

Let's place our trust and our hope in Jesus for the transformation of the world to the glory of God.

Amen

Time to Reflect

Today's readings are full of hope, reminding us that the resurrection is real, and new life is possible.

Take time to read the gospel passage slowly and prayerfully again.

Is there a word or a passage that stands out to you?

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

If Jesus were stood before you what would you like to ask him?

Take a time to sit quietly

A time of prayer

Let's pray

Holy and Loving God we pray for your world, for the leaders who are making difficult decisions as every day brings new changes and challenges.

Lord of all, Lord for all

Hear our prayer

We pray for our nation, that decisions might be made with wisdom and care for the benefit of all.

Lord of all, Lord for all

Hear our prayer

We pray for our area of Teddington Circuit, especially for Teddington Church and the Playgroup project. For all who live here and go to that group that your peace might reign and that your perfect love might settle our fears.

Lord of all, Lord for all

Hear our prayer

We pray for frontline workers, Drs, nurses, carers, shop workers, refuse collectors, postal workers. For the Methodist Church, Methodist Council and all seeking to support others.

Lord of all, Lord for all

Hear our prayer

We pray for our loved ones, those we know who may be ill, those who are struggling, those who are confused and conflicted... (you might like to name names here).

Lord of all, Lord for all

Hear our prayer

We pray for Macau, which like other areas of China has been facing the challenge Coronavirus. Thank you for you work there and the work of the Church.

Lord of all, Lord for all

Hear our prayer

And finally, we pray for ourselves, you know what is on our hearts and minds, and so we offer that to you (again you might like to name your own prayers and concerns)

Lord of all, Lord for all

Hear our prayer

AMEN

The Lord's Prayer
Our Father

Hymn: Listen to: My Jesus My Saviour (StF 363)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_alauL2xKA

A prayer of blessing

May you know the deep peace of the God who knows and perfectly loves you.

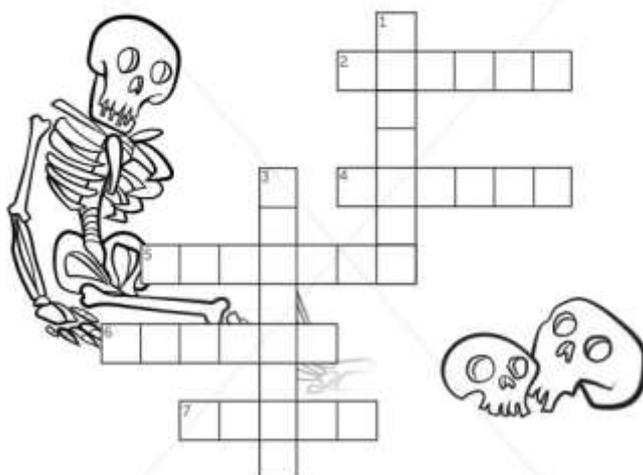
May take the yoke of Jesus upon you, knowing that he bears your load with you.

May you know the indwelling Spirit bringing you wisdom and peace.

Amen

VALLEY OF DRY BONES

Ezekiel 37:1-14



Across:

2. Ezekiel prophesied that the Lord would fill the bones with _____ and make them live again.
4. Ezekiel's _____ took him to a valley filled with dry bones.
5. The Israelites were taken _____ by Babylon.
6. The bones in the valley represented the _____ of Israel.
7. Ezekiel prophesied that the bodies would be filled with breath from the four _____.

Down:

1. When all of this came to pass the Israelites would know that the Lord fulfilled His _____.
3. After Ezekiel spoke God's prophecy the valley was filled with a _____ sound.