

It's a reading that doesn't have either the 'Hollywood special effects' drama of Ezekiel, or the huge emotional charge of the scene of Lazarus' death. Paul simply unfolds the 'revelation' that 'life', rather than being viewed as the 'cause' of everything (by which I mean, without life in the first place, not of this could happen anyway... which is, I admit, true) should be viewed as the symptom: we have life within us as a 'symptom' of the Holy Spirit's action. The dry bones in Ezekiel come to live once more as a symptom of God's action. Lazarus breathes and walks and lives again as a result of Jesus' action. Paul is saying that... to try to live as though there is no God, is to drive ourselves further and further away from the very thing that *gives* us life. Please be safe during these difficult times; heed the government's instructions... and, above all, love one another. God bless, Derek.

Collect, Special Prayer for today

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.

Old Testament Reading

Ezekiel 37.1-14 OT Pg: 836

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD.' So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.' I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely."

Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.'

New Testament Reading

Romans 8. 6-11 NT Pg: 168

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law – indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Gospel Reading

John 11. 1-45 NT Pg: 112

News

Coronavirus - Pastoral Care. Can the pastoral team reiterate that if anyone is housebound, for any reason, and especially at this time, the pastoral team can always be contacted and will be pleased to offer assistance in getting any essentials such as food or medicines. Please either contact a PA direct, call the Church Office on 884229 or for direct support from the Pastoral Team email: stmartinspastoral@gmail.com

Message from Bishop Andrew: https://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/docs/default-source/coronavirus/passion-sunday-2020.docx?sfvrsn=56360032_0

Traidcraft. Please contact Elizabeth Dobson direct on 881479 if you would like any items delivered locally.

Dorking Foodbank is operating at the usual times: <https://dorkingarea.foodbank.org.uk/> from the Christian Centre. Donation points in supermarkets remain as usual. This week we need donations of Biscuits, Rice Pudding, Tinned Veg, Tinned Meat Pies and 500g bags of Pasta. Thank you.

As a result of the Covid 19 situation **The Know Your Blood Pressure Day** scheduled to be held on Saturday 4 April at the Christian Centre has been cancelled. The Know Your Blood Pressure team at the Stroke Association have informed all local organisers that under no circumstances should the event take place at the current time. Dorking Rotary apologises for this cancellation and we hope to be back in action in 2021.

NHS appreciation. It was heart warming to hear and see the mass participation around Dorking on Thursday evening thanking NHS workers for their brave efforts in the fight against Covid-19. We are all so grateful for the work they are doing.

There will not be an April Challenger Magazine.

St Martin's Parish Magazine. The April edition of St Martin's Magazine is not available in paper format. Find it on our web page: www.stmartinsdorking.org

Christian Centre News. The Centre is closed for visitors to the Café, however the foyer is open for Community Fridge access 9-2.30pm weekdays, and hot take-away meals are available on weekdays at 12pm. Please call the centre to book your meal on 886830.

News and Notices for the next issue of the Weekly News Sheet are to be forwarded to the church office by the close of business on Wednesday. Please e-mail stmartinsdorkingchurchoffice@gmail.com or call 01306 884229. The Church Office is closed however Vicki and Michelle can still be contacted by e-mail or telephone. See above for contact details.

Please remember in your prayers: Pamela Kerslake, Betty and Brian Smith, Steve Parker, Heather Anderton, Mike Kendrick, Simon Hardcastle, Frankie Stoner, Paul Berning, Julie Mellows, John Alger and family.

And those who have recently died: Pippa Alger, Janet Greenhorn.

Being corporate at a distance. In these unprecedented times we are fortunate that there is a wealth of resources in different media available to enable us to be corporate even when not co-located! Whether you have a basic radio or the latest smartphone, there is something for you:-

Radio:

Radio 4 Thought for the Day - each day at 07.45am
Radio 3 Choral evensong - Wednesday at 3.30pm
(repeated on Sunday at 3.00pm)

TV: BBC1 Songs of Praise Sunday 1.15pm

Web-based resources: Daily Prayer- to enable you to follow from home exactly what Derek will be saying each day privately at 9am. Clicking in here will display the full text of the service with psalm and readings. Scroll down to green box "Morning Prayer".

<https://www.facebook.com/thechurchofengland>

Archbishop of York leads Sunday morning service from Bishopthorpe via Church of England facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/thechurchofengland>

Live Lent: A special season of reflections on caring for Creation at <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/living-out-our-faith/lent-holy-week-and-easter/livelent-care-gods-creation>

Live Stream Event: St Paul's Church are streaming Sunday services live:

<https://www.stpaulsdorking.org.uk/Groups/337937/>

[St Pauls Dorking/services/live_stream/](https://www.stpaulsdorking.org.uk/services/live_stream/live_stream.aspx)

[live_stream.aspx](https://www.stpaulsdorking.org.uk/services/live_stream/live_stream.aspx) Or at <https://stpaulsdorking.org.uk/youtube> to view the 9am traditional Holy Communion or 10.30am more informal Morning Worship.

Sunday 29th March
Fifth Sunday in Lent

LEN +

From Derek in his study.....

Dear Friends,
as I was researching this Sunday's Lectionary readings (those for the 5th Sunday in Lent) I stumbled across one theological commentator who said this: "There is a story that St Francis once got up to preach, looked down at the hushed, expectant faces below him and said, 'God has not given me anything to say to you.' And with that, he blessed the people, and got down again. Faced with today's readings from Ezekiel and John, I wish I had the courage to do that." Well, given the length of the readings and the resulting meagre word count to which I must adhere if this is all to fit into the WNS, I find myself compelled to take an *almost* similar route. Because, actually, the readings are well chosen... they fit together well... they speak of purpose and resurrection. Ezekiel... the valley of dry bones... God breathes his Spirit back into the bones, and they are filled with life. The prophet tells the people that these are the bones of the whole house of Israel... being restored to life. Then there's the gospel from John... the story of the raising of Lazarus—a story that you will know well. But, as you read, it can be so easy to focus only on the physical enormity of what takes place here: Jesus calling, instructing, *commanding* a dead person to live, to get up, to come out of the tomb. Yes... that is enormous. But don't allow the enormity of the act to cause you to miss the compassion that leads to it. Why do I say that? Because without it you *could* see this as a callous manipulation, or orchestration on the part of Jesus... designed to leave those who witness the event in no doubt whatsoever about the nature and degree of Jesus' authority! He didn't exactly 'rush' to get to Lazarus, did he. Jesus needed Lazarus to be truly and irrevocably dead—the process of physical decay already begun—if people were to be denied the opportunity to write this moment off with comments such as, 'Oh, Lazarus obviously wasn't really dead... just in a faint' etc. Jesus now sees Mary and her comforters crying... and the human cost of the moment for those people hits him between the eyes! A demonstration that he felt to be completely necessary for him to show God's power of life over death, has led to desolation and misery for those caught up in the drama of the moment, "... and Jesus began to weep."

So, what about the reading from Paul's letter to the Romans? Well, this pulls the whole package together quite nicely.