

SERMON FOR PASSION SUNDAY: St GEORGE'S EASTERGATE,

MARCH 29TH:

Today's readings launch us into Passiontide with a bang!

In Ezekiel Chapter 37 we have the dramatic prophecy of the valley of dry bones. Many thousands of years ago the prophet found himself struggling to have a message for God's people who were losing their faith in God. They could see themselves as God's people being completely obliterated. Dead. The prophet is given by God a dramatic vision of the breath of God breathing new life into these bones. The people of God come alive again!

Could this have a resonance for us..at this time in particular?

Now to our Gospel reading from John chapter 11. An equally dramatic reading of the victory of life over death. This was an event that happened as Jesus, against the advice of his friends, approaches Jerusalem, knowing full well the fate that was awaiting Him there.

For Jesus, meeting up with a family to whom he had become very close, this was an encounter very painful; where the reality of both bereavement and death were both very real. We see him reduced to tears; but also completely in command of the situation.

Lazarus' life was completely in Jesus' hands. Both he and his sisters were helpless in the face of his terminal illness. A situation that is coming very near to many of us.

What do we want and need from God at such times? What did Martha and Mary want? Did they want Lazarus brought back to life only to die again? They wanted and needed more than that; to know that Jesus was in control of the situation; that He was not helpless as they were when faced with the prospect of death. For now they experienced a miracle well beyond their wildest dreams; but of course Lazarus would have to die again , and they themselves would have to die one day. This merely prefigures both Jesus' own death and resurrection which would take place not so very far in the future and which gives us all the hope we so much need.

Our life experience here and now in March 2020 is, for us, unprecedented. Many of us feel we can't cope; the situation is quite beyond our control. The message for us today is that death is real, it was for Jesus, but it is most definitely not the end. He is in control. More of that over the next two weeks!

AMEN.