



# Word – Passion Sunday (Year A)

## The Readings

The related readings for this Sunday are:

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**

**Psalms 130**

**Romans 8:6-11**

**John 11:1-45**

We have chosen the theme: **God gives life**

*All the readings are available as PowerPoint versions of the text using the NIV. Romans 8:6-11 is offered as a Lectionary Video as is John 11:1-45 which is also covered by the MiracleMaker and the Visual Bible - John. Psalm 120 is available as a Sons of Korah Video (with and without words) and as a Liturgical PowerPoint: "Out of the depths I cry to You"*

## A talk

### **Why did Jesus delay?**

This seems harsh. After all his friends are in trouble. I suspect our reaction would be to go running, but he doesn't do this.

### **Rushing will not help**

Although the message is that he is ill, by this time Lazarus is most likely already dead as Jesus delayed 2 days and yet when he arrives we learn that Lazarus has been dead for 4 days. We can suspect he has died as the messengers have travelled. Jesus may have sensed this, for he says as much. Rushing will not change a raising miracle into a healing miracle

### **Timing is crucial on several fronts**

This is the final act in John's gospel before Palm Sunday, and Jesus is very mindful of entering Jerusalem at the right moment. Bethany is just over the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, no more than ½ a mile away (though today it is a drive of several miles due to 'The Wall!'). We know it is dangerous for him to go there because the Jews tried to stone him last time. The timing of all that will

happen needs to be right; rush and it could go wrong. In addition the disciples are reluctant to go. They need time to come round and are perhaps finally prompted by Thomas's classic comment – 'Let us also go, that we may die with him'.

### **Lazarus has to be thoroughly dead**

Jesus wants it thoroughly understood that Lazarus has been raised from the dead. There was a belief that the spirit hung round for 3 days and only then was someone considered undoubtedly dead. He holds power over life and death and he wants this clearly understood. Any less than 3 days and this miracle might be devalued in Jewish minds. Jesus knew when to rush into action and when to wait. It is a valuable gift, one that most of us would benefit from.

*This might be a good place for a break.*

**And then he gets there.**

### **Conversations with the sisters**

Both sisters make the same accusation, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' However the two conversations are very different. Martha responds with a bit of theological banter prompting Jesus to make an astounding claim, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die'. This is a huge claim, a claim of equality with God, who is the giver of life. Martha then expresses her faith in him.

Mary falls at his feet and bursts into tears. This leads not to a claim, but prompts Jesus to weep and then make a practical response.

### **The Proof**

'I am the resurrection and the life' is no empty claim. John's gospel is structured like this. Jesus makes an 'I am' claim and moves on to some deed to prove the truth of the claim. In this case he goes down to the tomb and calls Lazarus out of it. To everyone's sheer surprise and some people's delight, Lazarus comes out of the tomb. 'I am the resurrection and the life' is no empty claim. In this action Jesus has just demonstrated his right to make it.

### **The Precursor**

Then finally this is all a precursor. For God is about to back up this claim in a much more spectacular way. Jesus is soon to face arrest, trials and execution, perhaps even because of this claim and deed. He himself is resurrected. However for Jesus much more is happening than to Lazarus, for one day

Lazarus will die again and be buried to await resurrection. Strictly speaking for Lazarus this was not resurrection, but revivification, life given back to a mortal body that has had it taken away. Resurrection was demonstrated in the raising of Jesus and is a piece of eternity breaking into our world. This is something very different and is promised one day to us who believe in him.

### **Suggested Music**

Lord, I was blind! I could not see, William Tidd Matson, HP 423, RAS 358, MP 433

*(Tunes: LM, A babe is born, Accrington, Bodmin, Breslau, Ely, Llangollan, Saxby)*

Jesus the Lord said: I am the bread, Anonymous Urdu, Carl Monahan, Michael Ball, HP 137, STF 252, RAS 199, MP 384, Video

Now is eternal life, George Wallace Briggs, HP 203, RAS 432, CP 152

*(Tunes: 6 6 6 6 8 8, Christchurch (Steggall), Eastview, Latchford, Lawes Psalm 32)*

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain, John Macleod Campbell Crum, HP 204, STF 306, RAS 243, CP 153, JP 174, Video

*(Tunes: 11 11 10 11, Noel Nouvelet)*

IDEAS is a resource for All-Age worship produced each week from the Lectionary by Mike and Ann Bossingham. You can see more about this from the IDEAS website, [www.FFCTIDEAS.org.uk](http://www.FFCTIDEAS.org.uk)

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