

Notices

Good Morning, and welcome to Tyndale on this fourth Sunday of January. If you are a visitor, I extend a special warm welcome and hope you feel at home with us.

Our worship today is being conducted by our minister Michael Docker. I would like to thank him for leading us, and look forward to a greater understanding of God's message for us.

On Tuesday, our in-person Coffee Shop will take place here in the Sanctuary from 10am until 12 noon. Please do come and join us for a cup of tea or coffee and conversation.

On Wednesday our *time@tyndale* will be one of our faith matters evening when we will be looking at some aspect of faith. This is held in the Sanctuary, and refreshments are served from 7.30pm with the talk and discussion starting at 8pm. Please do come along and join us.

On Thursday our Zoom coffee shop takes place at 11.00am, with the sign in details being able to be obtained through the Tyndale web site. Thank you.

Welcome

Welcome to Tyndale Baptist Church, where you're here, on-line, or following the script, as we gather once again for a service of worship – and continue to follow the themes of the great 'I am' saying in John's gospel. Today we come to the story of Lazarus – a long story; that will be told in the service by a number of our people, using a script from the Dramatic Bible – really, it's all dramatic, the Bible; it's the drama of salvation; the great, mysterious story of God and his dealings with the people of earth told through lots of stories, poems, songs and accounts – the stories of real lives; just like the ones we're living...we bring them – our very selves – to be part of this worship, offered to the living God, in Christ..

'To Christ the seed' (solo verses)

Call to worship

From birth to growth; from growth to age; from age to death, from death to new birth – in every moment of life, we proclaim, God is to be found – and in *this* moment - these moments – we acknowledge his [presence
as we seek after Him – and worship Him, in Jesus's name

BPW12 'Jesus calls us here to meet him'

Last verse:

Jesus calls us to this worship -
God our focus and our aim.
God who makes and saves and holds us
We praise you in Jesus' name.
God whose life we seek and honour
Gives His peace to end all strife;
Faith reveals God's seen in Jesus'
Living, dying, rising Life.

Opening Prayer

Lord we hear the call loud and clear (or maybe quiet and, perhaps, faint) – well, however we hear, we come, into your presence, to acknowledge that you are here as we gather; Lord, we are a community of your people, and we come to praise you; your promises are sure, your friendship in Christ knows no bounds; you always renew our hope – and Lord, we confess, as we worship you in the name of Jesus, that He is the very
Word of life and our lives, the Lord of all and of our lives

Yet Lord, we also confess that we have not always recognised him, or followed him, that sometimes we have allowed barriers and division to flourish or to go unchallenged; that sometimes we have preferred our own ways to His way –

Lord forgive us – we wait on your word – Jesus said 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die' – thanks be to
God;

Now, Lord, thank you for forgiving us and restoring us, for we would die to ourselves again and live and believe in you always – lead us to serve and to live in your endless life and love through Christ...Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

BPW202 Jesus the Lord said 'I am the bread'

Reading [John 11:1-44](#)

'I am the res. I am eternal life' (video)

Sermon

There're places in the Bible where it gets real. Well, ALL of the Bible is real, but parts like the Christmas story are so overlaid with myth and Magic that they can seem *unreal*- they're not, of course - they just seem it..

Or the OT stuff; Egypt, Sinai etc; they're often lost to us in a 'Sunday School haze'.

But the story of Lazarus is where it gets real. Thanks guys for telling it to us..

I've always felt called to preach a faith that gets real.

You can keep your intense religious experiences, your favourite Christian slogan or fad; the latest fashionable theory about God, evangelistic campaign or spiritual programme -

None of it gets to the heart of the thing, for me. - You know that quote from David Jenkins, (I've used it before); 'as I get older I believe fewer things, but I believe them more deeply'

That'll do - as, apparently, they say in Yorkshire.

Real life, as it's really lived, by real people. Surely that's how it's always been - you can meet them in school, or in lanes, or at sea, in church, or in trains, or in shops, or at tea; (hymn)

A bit dated, but still true - real life is what you, me and everybody else are living, of course; it's obvious that faith has to deal with real life.. Or else it's no faith worthy of the name.

And the story of Lazarus, is one place where faith gets real, don't you think?

Behind all John's favourite themes; the glory of God; Jesus 'in control', the misunderstanding of his followers that allows Jesus to lay it on thick; a great 'I am' saying - 'I am the Resurrection and the Life'

Is a very human story. Sickness; death, grief; Jesus holding back!! showing emotion, wrestling with the iron laws of the world by which a friend gets sick & dies & would stay buried, but for Jesus wrestling to bring life out of death;

he is himself not yet resurrected; the power of death for the world is not yet defeated, but here is a foretaste...'I am the resurrection & the life' -

do you believe this? He asks Martha. I think he asks it of himself, as well...'do I believe this?' Asks it of us. In the middle of our real lives we have to wrestle with this iron law, don't we?

Never mind who you are or how it is for you, do you believe this? Do you believe that the iron law is broken? Will you live your real life as if it can? Will you wrestle with the Iron Law?

The pandemic has been a great leveller, hasn't it? So many people, from all walks of life. We've lived these last decades with the expectation of longer lives and improving health

And on the back of that we've built our lives; around long and happy retirement; around medical treatment at the end of a short wait; around fulfilling our dreams..-

Thank the Lord for hospice care & wonder drugs of all kinds, making many deaths pain-free,

But..pandemics happen; most of history most people have lived with illness, pain, suffering, and, of course, died - comes to us all - of course; you know this; it's real life, isn't it?

Much of my ministry has been spent (apart from preaching) around sickness & death

Oh, I've been glad that mostly pain has been controlled; most folk die in peace; many sicknesses have been overcome. Covid 19 hasn't come close, until recently when, thankfully, it has been mild..

And many in the medical world have wrestled with the iron laws of sickness and death, and developed medicines and vaccines and treatments.

Still, I have raged sometimes at the sheer unfairness and misery of serious illness and death.. Haven't you, sometimes, raged? How did Dylan Thomas put it? 'Rage, rage against the dying of the light'

Jesus raged 'deeply moved' (how polite!); John's word was mostly used of horses' snorting

Jesus 'snorted with indignation' when he heard about Lazarus's death, the grief-stricken sisters & their friends - & at Lazarus's tomb. Jesus raged. I reckon that's the first step when faced with the iron law - with mortality; we hope for diplomacy in Ukraine; we ring their hands at the soaring cost of living & the many who will have to choose, soon, between heating & eating; we regret the loss of so many lives in the pandemic,

We try not to think too much about the terrible cold and famine of millions in Afghanistan

But really we ought to rage; people, in one of the richest countries in the world, starving or freezing; the terrible loss of so many lives in the pandemic...

That's mortality, isn't it? What it means to be human;rage, rage against the dying of the light...

Jesus raged...and then, I think, he wrestled with the iron law. See I have this idea that Jesus himself had to face what mortality meant, when he stood outside Lazarus's grave.

That his own words came back to haunt him 'I am the resurrection and the life' - do you believe this? Do I believe this?

This is what it means *here*. If not here it doesn't mean it anywhere else

It sounds nice on a sunny Galilean hillside. It makes for a good theme on a preaching plan in a church in Bristol..it looks lovely scrolling slowly on a video behind a nice singing voice..

But - at a crematorium, a graveside, by a hospital bed, on the Ukrainian border; on an Afghanistan hillside or in an ice-cold flat or at the local foodbank - more foodbanks in this country than branches of MacDonalds

If it doesn't mean something in those places; it doesn't mean much at all - 'I am the Resurrection and the Life'

I think it echoes in words that people who don't have any skin in the Christian game use - 'Death shall have no dominion' (Dylan thomas), 'what will survive of us is love' (Philip Larkin) 'You raise me up' (Josh Brogan) - 'Hallelujah' (Leonard Cohen) - I dreamed a dream' (Susan Boyle)

'I am the Resurrection & the Life' echoes through the hopes & dreams of every human person - whoever mourned the loss of a loved one; faced a serious illness; contemplated their own mortality, railed against injustice-

It's human - and Jesus was human to his boots (sandals) and standing at the grave of his friend, can't you feel the rage, see him wrestling with the iron law; see him believing..

'Come out!' I wonder if he wondered what would happen.. Talk about living by faith! Imagine the humiliation if nothing had happened, if the tomb had remained shut & the stinking corpse of Lazarus had remained shackled to the iron law of sickness and death.

I think at that moment Jesus is more like one of us than at any point;

I can see there, as he raged, wrestled and believed... the rage of the bereaved in any age; the struggle of the medic, the artist, scientist, builder and banker in any age - whoever dreamed, whoever hoped, whoever tried to overcome; whoever tried to make something of their real life

And the believer - of any age, who believed that the iron law could be overcome..

'Come out!' - come out of your sickness; your love of weapons or violence; your addiction to destruction and greed and anything that makes for death - 'come out!'

In the story, Lazarus came out..It's not full resurrection is it? He's going to die again.. It's not eternal life...it's a foretaste, is all - which is why, probably, the story comes in John's gospel just before Jesus heads to Jerusalem and begins the long slide towards the cross

No gap at all between your faith and your real life? Maybe between your real life and the life of God there is a *huge* gap -

Thanks be that the gap has been bridged by Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life....

do you believe this? Do you believe this?

Offering Prayer

Lord, we come to you; and in the face of our own mortality and all the destruction of the world, we rage, wrestle, and believe – and say 'help us in our mediocrity; help us when we're too quick to accept what's wrong; help us when we don't believe' –

So we give, of ourselves in these and all our gifts, so that the world's death-dealing and destruction - and ours- will be replaced with the spirit of the Resurrection and the Life.

The grace

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God & the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us evermore, Amen

Prayers (inc; response song)

**Lord of life, we come to you;
Lord of all, our Saviour be;
Come to bless and to heal
With the light of your love**

We come as we are: Lord, we pray for the wonderful world in which we live. We thank you for all that humankind has achieved, even as we recognise the forces of selfishness and greed that threaten to blow us off course; and we pray for all those whose humanity is not enhanced, but reduced, by the activity of their fellow human beings.

*Through the years of light and life,
In our happiness and peace,
Bring us knowledge of you,
Help us live in your love.*

We express our common human experience in this prayer; for we know about pain and suffering, even if different in degree to those who suffer in war or live in fear at the destruction all around them.

*Through the days of doubt and toil,
In our joy and in our pain,
Guide our steps in your way,
Make us one in your love,*

We commit ourselves once more to live in this world as human beings called by you; to love, to seek the highest and finest, and to overcome the powers of evil that threaten us all.

*Through the deserts of our world,
In resistance, work and hope,
Show us signs of your way,
Lead us on in your love.*

We live in faith in this prayer; we are no different to those who live by greed and idolatry, but for your grace to us: Lord, pour out your grace freely, even on those who see nothing of value beyond their own self-interest;

*In temptations large and small,
Greed, idolatry and fear,
Breathe your Spirit's calm breath
Hold us close in your love.*

Above all things, deepen the work of your loving Spirit in us and around us, so that we might see more clearly the things that belong to your Kingdom, and look beyond the false promises of this world.

*Through the lives we live with you,
In our hope and in the Faith,
Keep our hearts filled with joy
Let us trust in your love.*

Finally, lead us on and reveal to us again the great truth of the dying Lord who rises to lift us all into your presence – the Resurrection and the Life

**Lord of life, we come to you;
Lord of all, our Saviour be;
Come to bless and to heal
With the light of your love**

St Mungo Music/Michael Docker/Panel on Worship

BPW242 At the dawning of salvation

Benediction

Thanks everyone who has made today's service possible. We continue on into this New Year, hopefully, faith-fully and trustingly; believing that He-who-is-our-life holds all our futures in his hands