



## Daily Devotions

*Dear friends, it is a strange time. As we are asked to practice social distancing, I pray that these devotions will connect you to one another spiritually. Perhaps you can even phone, Facebook, zoom or text one another as you go through the liturgy & wonders.*

*We will continue to reflect on the theme begun at the start of Lent. On Easter Day we will hear a story of Mary Magdalene in a garden where the tomb of Jesus was. She has discovered the tomb of Christ is empty & is overwhelmed with fear & sadness. As she mourns she is greeted by Jesus, though she does not recognize him. Instead she presumes him to be the Gardener.*

*Jesus the Gardener is walking with us through the desert of life, particularly now. Jesus plants seed, waters them, helps them grow & remains with them even to their death. For we know a grain of wheat must die before it can produce fruit.*

*Keep growing,*

*the Reverend David Taylor, Rector*



## 1. The Preparation

*A candle is lit as someone says,*

*Creator & Healer, you work your Sabbath will in the chaos of our life: teach us the insight that gives true judgement & praises you wherever you are found, making miracles from spit & mud; through Jesus Christ, the Son of earth. **Amen.***

## 2. The Reading & Reflection

*Read the passage from Scripture then reflect using the wonder questions as your guide. This guide uses the New Revised Standard Version.*

### EZEKIEL 37:1-14 – BRINGING LIFE OUT OF DEATH

*Notes on the reading:*

- *The Prophet Ezekiel is an author with a vivid imagination. The way he expresses the message God has given him is alive, fresh & full of action. To get an idea of how Ezekiel communicates, read his vision of God in chapter 1 & his enactment of the exile in chapter 12. Ezekiel's message is an embodied message.*
- *God often calls Ezekiel Mortal. This can also be translated Son of Man. This is a title later given to Jesus. The early church saw Jesus' prophetic ministry as following in the footsteps of Ezekiel. The name later became a way to describe Jesus as God become Human.*
- *This famous story in Ezekiel inspired the great Spiritual, Dem Bones. Find an old copy of this song & imagine how the language of Ezekiel is an inspiration for minority or oppressed groups.*
- *Prophecy is the spiritual practice of bringing life to the world (v. 4, 9, & 12)*

*I wonder what your favourite part of this story is.*

*I wonder if God communicates to you in dramatic signs & visions.*

*I wonder how this story gives you courage.*

*I wonder how you prophesy life to the world around you.*

## PSALM 130 – GOD LISTENS EVEN TO THE VERY BOTTOM

Notes on the reading:

- Psalm 130 is one of the Songs of Ascents which means it was likely sung or recited by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for a feast. Perhaps the Feast was Yom Kippur when Jews confessed sin & offered sacrifices for atonement.
- The Latin title is De Profundis. There are many pieces of music set to this psalm. Look one up & listen.
- The poet's confidence in God's mercy & forgiveness is striking.
- Verse 6 gives insight to the psychological effect of pre-electric societies. A morning watcher was out on guard to protect the community from danger. The longing for the morning, when sight was again effective, was a real thirst. This is likely why the line is repeated twice.
- The Hebrew word translated as Steadfast Love is the great Chesed of God. God's love is the very foundation of our hope. God wants to help, not to harm.

*I wonder if you or someone you know has ever hit rock bottom.  
I wonder if you trust God will bring life.  
I wonder if darkness (unknowing) scares you.  
I wonder how God's Chesed (steadfast love) has given you hope.*

## ROMANS 8:6-11 – THE PRIMACY OF AN INNER SPIRITUAL LIFE

Notes on the reading:

- Paul's great Letter to the Romans contains his most articulate theology. Still, when pieces like this one are read isolated from the rest of the letter or from the rest of his writings, problems can occur. It is important to remember Paul is not a Greek philosopher who cares only for the spirit at the expense of the material world. Paul is not a dualist; he is a faithful Hebrew thinker who works to bring spirit & flesh together.
- The Greek word for Flesh is Sarkos. The Greek word for Spirit is Pneuma.
- Paul's argument here is that human nature does not have the capacity to live a spiritually healthy life apart from the inspiration of the Spirit of God.
- Because of this incapacity, we need to set our mind on God's Spirit to help us negotiate our life. If we do not, we die spiritually. If we do even our mortal bodies are given new life (v. 11)
- By putting God's Spirit first we can live full embodied lives. By putting our bodily needs first, even our spirit suffers.

*I wonder how you take care of your body's needs  
I wonder how you take care of your heart or spirit's needs.  
I wonder if you've noticed better physical health when you pay attention to your inner healing.*

**JOHN 11:1-45 – JESUS BRINGS SPIRITUAL LIFE OUT OF DEATH**

Notes on the reading:

- The death of Lazarus is a hinge in the narrative of the Gospel according to John. Because of Jesus' ability to bring new life to Lazarus & his family, the religious leaders become jealously enraged & begin to plot his death. This response to new life by religious leaders is all too often repeated in history. Consider the stamping out of the work of the Wesleys by the Church of their day. Consider the wariness of religious leaders when it comes to the charismatic movement. We all too often want to stamp out life. Let us remember this as we move closer to Holy Week & what happens when we try to stamp out Jesus' life.
- Some of the earliest interpreters of John (cf. Origen) loved to read this story metaphorically as Jesus' call to spiritual life for all of us Lazaruses.
- Resurrection is not simply an event at the end of history. New life is possible right now!

*I wonder if someone has ever tried to stifle your enthusiasm.  
I wonder if you have ever felt like Lazarus: spiritually dead.  
I wonder How God prophesies new life out of you.*

**EXODUS 15:22-27 – SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION IS ALWAYS**

Notes on the reading:

- Our final reading this week is another glimpse into the desert experience of the first wanderers. They have just found freedom from their enslavement but find themselves thirsty.
- Three days in the wilderness without water (v. 22) is symbolic of the seriousness of their spiritual situation. & when they finally find water, it turns out to be harmful to them. So they get grumpy, as we all do when we neglect or spiritual hunger for so long.
- The bitter water can be understood as alternative ways we fill our hearts that in the end are not satisfying, maybe even dangerous.
- Even the bitterest waters can be made healthy with the presence of God. Early church readers saw the wood thrown into the water as an anticipation of the cross.
- God will always lead us to good springs, if we are willing to follow.

*I wonder if you have ever been spiritually thirsty or hungry.  
I wonder what you fill your heart with.  
I wonder where you can find good springs of water for your heart.*

**3. Prayers & the Lord's Prayer**

Pray one of the litanies beginning on page 110 of the Book of Alternative Services & conclude with the Lord's Prayer.