

Prayers: Father in heaven, thank you that Jesus suffered for us and through his death and resurrection we receive forgiveness of our sins and the promise of eternal life. Help us in these difficult times to draw upon your strength as we know that you love each one of us.

We pray especially for:

Sick: Lolita Alvira, Inez Bennett, Dawn Forey, Hanna Librato, Marion Mason and Ken Peters.

May the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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**Matthew and Jonny are continuing to say
Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer
in the Chapel every day on a rota.**

St John's Church

Alternative Pew Sheet

29th March 2020

Welcome!

The Church of England continues to follow Government advice. Sadly it is not possible for services, baptisms, weddings and funerals in church to take place. We also have to keep the church closed.

This is the second edition of our alternative pew sheet. We are committed to keeping in touch with everyone at St Johns and offer some resources: [here](#).

If you need any help or assistance from Matthew or Jonny, please be in touch (see page four).

**'Peace I leave with you.
My peace I give you.
I give to you not as the world gives.
Don't be troubled or afraid.'**
John 14:27

ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST - MISSION STATEMENT

Drawn together by Christ's love, we seek by his grace to live out his commandments to love the Lord our God with all of our being; and to love

St John's

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The Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passiontide begins)

The Collect

Gracious Father, you gave up your Son out of love for the world: lead us to ponder the mysteries of his passion, that we may know eternal peace through the shedding of our Saviour's blood, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible Readings (click on link to access passages:

[Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)

[Psalm 130](#)

[Romans 8:6-11](#)

[John 11:1-45](#)

Reflection (by Jonny)

In our Gospel reading, we have the miracle of Lazarus being raised from the dead. It shows Jesus at his most powerful, but also at his most vulnerable. When Jesus meets Mary and Martha, after the death of their brother Lazarus, they are disappointed with him, saying Jesus could have stopped Lazarus from dying. John 11:32 says *'when Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

Mary's words towards Jesus, and along with the death of his friend Lazarus, deeply troubles Jesus and moves him to tears. This reminds us that Jesus, who was present at the creation of the world, also felt pain, and even cried. Jesus was not immune to the struggles of the world, and he certainly does not remain idle when there is suffering. This is especially important in these times of difficulty and uncertainty. Jesus is not blind to our pain and sufferings in this world, and he is not blind to our isolation. Instead, he is present with us and knows the struggles we face.

Jesus, before he meets with Mary and Martha, is aware that Lazarus is going to die. In verse 11 it says: *'After he had said this, he went on to tell them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.'*

So why is he moved to tears later in the chapter. Put simply, he sees the pain of Mary and Martha. He is deeply troubled by their suffering. In turn, he is deeply troubled and pained when we also experience suffering.

Jesus, when he sees our suffering, is moved so greatly that he takes it all upon himself when he is nailed to the cross. Christ goes to the cross so that he may put an end to our pain and suffering.

Although we still face suffering in this present world, Jesus' sacrifice marks its downfall. Because in time we will see a world where there is no suffering, no pain, and no tears. And that is made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

A popular question for a talk on suffering is: Why does God allow suffering? And the answer to that is simple, God does not allow suffering. Instead, God attacks the very nature of suffering, through Jesus, by going to the cross and taking on the sins of the world and conquering death.

It is with this that we can know that we are not alone. We are not left by God to face our sufferings alone. Jesus is with us.

The song 'Absence' by the band Deathbreaker (interesting name!) says it better than I ever could. The song is God saying:

Oh my child I am closer than you've ever known
I see your struggle, and I know your pain, because I feel it too.
I am not an absent father,
and my thoughts for you outnumber the stars.
Please know that I am with you and that you are loved.