



## A Reflection for Lent 5 Readings - Ezekiel 37.1-6 & John 11. 1-45

These are strange and unprecedented times. For our church buildings to be locked up, closed to all, including for the private devotions of the Priest. It is only 14 days since we were gathered together as community in church. But it feels as though we have not gathered for months. A single day feels more like a week. It feels so strange not to be in communion with one another for we have been created to be in relation by a loving Creator God who is community in Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The staying at home and demonstrating solidarity with the rest of the country is a small sacrifice compared to many others as we seek to protect the NHS and save lives.

With the suspension of all church services and the drive by The National Church to embrace new technologies I have been surprised at my reticence at the prospect of virtual worship from the vicarage. It does not feel right for I long to be in community, gathered together. I believe that an important aspect of Church is the being there, united in the moment doing things together. But we cannot do that and so we must adapt for the now, as we make ready for the time when we will be physically together.

As I ponder this dilemma I am drawn to the theology of the sacrament - an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace - therefore may be in these unprecedented times of course we can experience God via a live video stream. For we can experience God when watching a prerecorded television programme. For our Creator God of love is omnipresent, God is with us wherever we go and whatever the situation.

Our readings express something of the relationship that Ezekiel and Jesus have with God. That communion with the Creator of all things. The going back and forth as with all relationships by what is spoken, what is dreamt and by what happens.

And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me.'

God listens. Our God is a God who is always listening.

In these most anxious and unprecedented times that we are living in let us remember that nothing can separate us from the love of God who in relation is always listening.

How do we respond to the global situation we find ourselves in? We respond by observing the government guidelines about staying home. We also remember that our God is listening and so we pray. In prayer we develop our relation with the source of love and in that relationship we allow ourselves to fall into that loving embrace that is always listening.

I am working to have available a live video stream so that if you wish we can be connected as we join in daily prayer as we unite together allowing ritual and language to connect us. In this action we remember that we are always connected to God.

Thank you for reading and please keep safe.

The Reverend Nick Devenish

*Adrian's hymn choice for this morning - When I survey the wondrous cross by Isaac Watts*

*Painting by Jose de Ribera - The Raising of Lazarus*