**Lent 5 sermon- The bad news and the good news**

**Lazarus living**

In our reading from the gospel attributed to St [John 11.1-45](http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=451752982), Jesus raises the long-dead Lazarus. Before the miracle, Jesus weeps over the loss of his dear friend, and the account tells us he is greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.

*When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus began to weep.* John 11.33- 35

Now some folks will tell you, that if you love God and trust in him then when somebody you love dies, you ought to celebrate. Note though, that Jesus Christ, knowing what God can do, and all the Son is capable of, still grieves. Grief is natural and ought not be swept away for the convenience of others.

God will never abandon us or those who we love even at the end. To death of the body, and to the living deaths of injustice, greed or cruelty God will bring life. *‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, 26and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.* John 11.25-26

This is our story. The story of life, abundance and refreshment even from situations of death, decay and fear.

**We’re on a good wicket**

Friends, remember that we are blessed.

You and I take for granted things our neighbours may not have. We have a church community that is going to keep connecting with us, praying for and with us and giving us strength. People who will help us if we get into strife. A church building that is open for prayer every day, and a church community that has both the expertise and resources to adapt to these times.

We live in South Australia. There is nowhere else I would sooner be as we ride out this pandemic. We have better food security, medical facilities, access to water and natural beauty than almost anyone else in the whole world.

Due to our blessings, it has been comfortable to be the church of God in recent decades in beautiful Adelaide. It is been comfortable to be church people for decades and decades.

**The clear call on Christians in this time**

We have read stories from the bible every week about lepers, the dead being raised and harrowing psalms, like [psalm 130 from this week](http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=451753007). All the while, this has not been our lived experience on most days, in most weeks, most months.

However, in March 2020 things have changed. This IS the time for words like those in our psalm *“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!”*. This is the time when being a follower of Jesus Christ really counts. This is a time to serve and to bring genuine hope in God’s name.

The time of *comfortable* has ended, and the time for living out what we say each week in creed, song, psalm, prayer has arrived.

We must feed the poor.

We must keep stocking [our pantry](http://stjudesbrighton.org.au/st-judes-community-pantry/) wherever we can and as long as we feel safe to do it. I will use antibacterial sanitiser after I have placed items in it, and I invite you to consider doing the same.

Our pantry has been positively reported by a local member of Council in their social media, and been the subject of discussion on ABC radio. They are just the promotions I have heard about. You may recall that we received thanks and blessings from a recipient of pantry supplies last fortnight, and this week we received another note from a different user saying this to you “Dear Pantry (heart) Thank you SO much in our time of crisis! God bless all of you xxx”. Our gifts are simply a small reflection of God’s outrageous generosity with each of us.

**Your challenge, should you choose to accept it**

Further to stocking the pantry (where safe to), I challenge you to reach out in God’s name this week.

It should not be just people who are part of our church who feel supported.

We need to share that gift. Perhaps you know a few people who are not regular church folks, who you think could use some TLC and a call a week, at this time of high anxiety?

The challenge is to phone them, ask how they are going, tell them your praying for them, and offer our help as a church if needed. I know we’re private Anglican’s; but frankly the time for being a quiet Christian has passed.

People need to know they are valuable, not forgotten, not inconvenient, not a burden. Loved, precious, remembered and supported.

It may also reassure the people you contact that staying in weekly contact with them is something your church has asked you to do. Telling them this will not be appropriate in all settings, but you will decern what feels right to you. Staying in contact with folks regularly is really important at the moment, and will help us to meet the needs of struggling people as they arise.

The bad news is… this is the time to be an unashamed Christian.

The good news is… this is the time to be an unashamed Christian.

God bless you wonderful St Jude’s.

The Lord be with you!