

Raising Lazarus

We come this morning to worship the Living God. Just pause and think about that, the Creator of the World is here now by his spirit - let's just pause and say thank you. Thank you that in you God we have life now and we will have life with You forever in heaven. Thank you loving God for your kindness . Amen

Today All Age looking at the story of Lazarus. Our young people are going to be helping with this. But before we go any further let's sing a song to thank God for his kindness.

Hymn – To God be the glory

Do you find it easy to wake up in the morning? Hmmm.

Well, some people wake up easily and others find it hard to wake up. I have some different ways of waking people up. Many people use an alarm clock like this. (LISTEN TO THE RING). That would wake up some people. Other people wake up when the birds sing outside (CHIRP). Can you make the sound of a bird chirping? That's good. There are other people who sleep very soundly. They need to be woken up with something like this a megaphone or (Bang the pots and pan lids.) We can wake up just about anyone if we make enough noise. However, no matter how much noise we make I don't think we could wake up someone who had died. That would be impossible. But did you know there is someone who can even wake up the dead. His name is Jesus.

We are going to hear about how Jesus told someone to wake up, even though he had died.

Bible Reading/drama

Before we sing again I have a game The "Who's in Control" Game - because that story makes me wonder was Jesus really in control of the bad and sad, when Lazarus died as well as when everyone was glad when Jesus called him back to life again?

So anyone who wants a chance of winningplease come to the front. I want each of you to chose a slip of paper and it has a number on it, you might be the winner or the loser so pick carefully, don't show it to anyone else.....

I am going to pick a number out of my head and whoever has that number is the winner and has to jump up and down and shout "I win! I win!"

Say I Pick the number "8."

(Make out as many slips of paper with the number "8" on them and put them in a bowl.

Why did everybody win? - I had control and made it so!

I chose the number and wrote the slips of paper and bought the prizes. I was in complete control of the game. I had planned every bit of it.

We are going to think about something a bit sad this morning, but as we hear it we need to remember that all the while God was in control, even though it looked sad, God had a plan to make it glad!

Song: Our God is a great big God

Jesus was friends with Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. Jesus went away to do some work in another town and poor Lazarus got really sick. When Jesus heard about this we would have expected him to go straight back to make him better. We already know about Jesus making sick people well. He has amazing powers to do that. But no Jesus stays away and Lazarus died. That seems pretty unkind doesn't it - not the kind of thing we would expect Jesus to do. But Jesus had told his friends that the sickness wouldn't end in death. No he says it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it. What a strange thing to say - that people would love God and Jesus more by him not going back to make him well. He tells his friends the disciples that " I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe". Jesus is going to turn on its head the bad/sad news to be glad news. But his friends had to wait 2 days for it to actually happen. Imagine how hard that was knowing Lazarus was poorly but Jesus stayed away and then hearing he had in fact died - they must have been very confused and sad and probably a bit cross.

When Jesus arrived back to where Lazarus had been buried and he saw how sad people were the Bible says, 'Jesus wept' – those two words tell us a lot about how much Jesus cared for his friends.

Ask why do people cry: we cry because we've hurt ourselves, or because we're frustrated, or sad, or angry, or because someone close to us is sad and we are sad with them. It's good that we have a God who weeps with us when we are weeping. Write these on the sad face emoticon.

Jesus asks Mary if she trusts him and even in her sadness Mary says she does. Jesus says this amazing thing to her and in fact he says it to each one of us:

"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will have life, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" Jesus is saying I am in complete control, both of the here and now and of the future. He promises us life forever in heaven and a good life in the here and now, these are both gifts from God.

But the story doesn't stop there with everyone still being sad. Jesus tells Lazarus to 'come out' of the tomb – out of the dark of the cave, and into the light of day. That was a strange thing to say to someone who had died. But you Jesus was in complete control he knew what God's plan was all along. He knew that God would be praised more and that people would understand a little bit better who he was if they saw him do something amazing like this.

So as Lazarus came out of the tomb can you imagine the joy of his sisters and his friends.

Ask for suggestions: What sort of things make us happy? even if we're going through a difficult time we can still have glimmers of joy: seeing a friend, or if something good happens, or someone is kind to us, or if we remember something nice that once happened... (Remember, some things make us smile and cry and the same time!) Write these on the happy emoticon.

A few weeks ago we talked about celebrating the abundant life we have in God. I bet Lazarus must have been pretty excited to come back to life and to feel well, not even be poorly anymore. I wonder whether he lived his life differently after coming out of the tomb? Did he squeeze all the goodness out of each day and live gratefully for his life?

WITH A FEW PEOPLE AROUND YOU JUST 2 MINS What helps you remember how special and precious life is?

So from the story of Lazarus this morning two simple lessons: Jesus understands our emotions. He cried, he wept when he saw his friends sadness and felt their pain. Our God is a God who rejoices with those who rejoice and weeps with those who weep. In our lives, as we wait, maybe for things at school/home to get better, or to get recognised at work, or to cope with the health issues better or manage our sadness we can be confident that Jesus understands our emotions. Let's not pretend before him, let's be real and in

our waiting let's seek to meet with Jesus, by reading the bible and by praying and let's ask him to give us hope. Let's also really rejoice with those who are happy and let's sit with those for whom life is hard. Jesus gives us hope in the here and now and tells us that we can be confident in him to infinity and beyond - or eternity as the bible calls it.

Finally I think this story challenges us to trust in God's timing. Jesus delaying his return meant he could show his power and that he was in control. He gave his friends a chance to grow their trust in him. We can all choose how we handle ourselves when something we really want to happen doesn't happen straight away. Whilst we wait we can let it fester and make our hearts sick, or we can wait with expectation. We can choose to persevere, to keep trusting God's goodness despite our current circumstances and it can actually make us stronger and build our character. And that trust leads to a deeper friendship with God. And that friendship will never, not ever disappoint us.

Hymn – Make me a channel of your peace

BAPTISM, then 'One more step'

PRAYERS – STOP (Jesus, Lord of Life: **hear our prayer**)

S-Sorry - Lord we are sorry for those times when we haven't noticed people who are sad when we are too busy with our own lives. We are sorry too for making you sad when we make bad choices. (PAUSE) Please forgive us. Please help us to notice those in need and help us to give generously of ourselves. Thank you that your eye is always upon us and that your love never fails. **Jesus, Lord of life....**

T-Thank You - Thank you for all these things we have written on our smiley face. Thank you for our friends and families who bless us and care for us and make us smile. Thank you for the beauty all around us, the flowers that have sprung and the promise of so much new life around us. Thank you for your kindness and care and that you are always with us. Thank you that nothing can separate us from your love. **Jesus, Lord of life....**

O – Others. In our Bible story today we saw Jesus weeping when he shared in the sadness of his friends. **God you created our world to be beautiful and we have broken it. We know you must weep over the pain you see written on the faces of so many of your children whom you love with an everlasting love. Please would you soften our hearts again and move us to pray and respond to those in need in our world.** Lord there are so many parts of the world where people are weeping. In Somalia where there is no food - please release aid, in the Middle East where there is continued fighting, please bring peace, where in our own nation people get angry and do hateful things. Please Jesus come and transform hearts. **Jesus, Lord of life....**

We pray too for those who are poorly and for those who have died and their families who grieve. Take a moment to bring before the Lord anyone on your heart..... Please may each of these special people known to us and loved by you know your help, comfort and peace. **Jesus, Lord of life....**

P- Please. Please Jesus help us to be aware of all our blessings - **help us to be creative and wise in how we can serve those around us. Give us courage to be kind and to take the initiative, give us patience to bear the difficulties.** Please help us to remember that you are in control and that you are good. Please may we know your strength in our weakness. Thank you for the gift of this precious and special life, help our eyes to be opened to your goodness, and in this season of lent please draw us back to yourself. (QUIET) **Help us to strip away anything that gets in the way of really meeting with you, whether disappointment, anger, general apathy or busyness. Please help us to sit long enough to be aware of our blessings in you and your goodness in our lives. Jesus, Lord of life....**