

JILL BELL'S SHORT SERMON FOR 29TH MARCH 2020 – LENT 5, YEAR A

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45

Trust, Obey and Hope

According to the story, St. Francis once got up to preach, looked at his congregation, said “God has not given me anything to say to you”, and sat down.

This morning it feels rather as if everything God might be saying to us is contained in the very powerful stories set for our readings. If you haven't already read the story of the valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14), the extract from St. Paul's letter to the Romans (Romans 8:6-11) and John's account of the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-45), then I suggest you do so now, before going any further.

There is so much depth in these readings. For me, the message that comes over loud and clear, in these difficult days for us all, is a call to trust and obey – and hope.

Although God asked something extraordinary of him, Ezekiel listened, and prophesied as God commanded. His is a wonderful example of unquestioning trust and obedience. And the passage ends with a promise to Ezekiel and all the people. God will act. God will prevail.

In the story of the raising of Lazarus, his sister, Martha, trusted Jesus, telling him: “I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus trusted his heavenly Father. As a result of God's intervention, not only Martha and Mary but many others came to believe in Jesus. God acted. God prevailed.

There's a sense in which St. Paul sums all this up when he writes to the Christians in Rome: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also, through his Spirit that dwells in you.” In today's Lenten Candle Reflection, which I hope you've been able to access, we are reminded that we are sanctuaries. Each one of us is a place where God's Spirit dwells.

May we all hold on to this good news, today and in the coming week. In trust and obedience, may we who believe in his promise offer hope to a troubled world. **AMEN.**