

## Thought for the Day

*Thought for the day is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.*

*For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>*

*Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)*

*Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.*

Monday 30 March

John 11.28-44

This passage takes up the story from Saturday's reading, of Lazarus being raised from the dead. It's a long, detailed narrative, lovingly told. In verse 33 we find Jesus approaching the tomb of Lazarus with all those who were mourning, and he was '*greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.*'

These words in the Greek original are actually hard to translate. The emotion is very very strong, even fierce, as if Jesus was feeling something violent and inexpressible. The onlookers were surprised, even in a culture where men would weep, and even knowing that Lazarus had been his friend. It seemed out of the ordinary. '*See how he loved him*' they wondered.

For us this can be a real comfort. Somebody hearing or reading this may have lost a loved one to the coronavirus. Many thousands of people around the world have done. It is natural to ask, 'Where is God in this?' 'Why doesn't God act?'

Part of the answer is that God is where God always is – right in the midst of it with us, sharing the hardest of emotions, as Jesus did that day, feeling the outrage and horror, the sheer injustice of it, that we feel. Jesus was grieving not just at the death of one man but of all death, all grief, all bereavement, all suffering and pain. He was outraged and infuriated that anyone has to go through this agony. In a very short time, he was going to go through it himself, and perhaps he was already aware of that, anticipating it.

Another part of the answer to the question 'Where is God in this and why doesn't God act?' is that God usually chooses to act through us. We see this over and over again in Scripture, how people are called to do God's work, to be agents of God's salvation, and often it is the most unlikely characters who find themselves doing this. As unlikely perhaps as me or you. It was St Teresa of Avila who expressed this most powerfully:

*"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours."*

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*