

Both readings today are about life after death, new life, given by God. The old Testament reading speaks in terms of physical resurrection but it is actually about God's people being spiritually dead and God's plans for their spiritual resurrection, whereas the Gospel reading is about physical resurrection. Both are possible with God.

I will begin with the reading from Ezekiel to draw out some thoughts for today. Verse 5 says, "I will cause breath to enter you and you shall live." This is repeated in verse 6, but this time it sounds more personal with God saying, "...will put breath into you". In verse 9, Ezekiel is told to say, "Breathe upon these slain, that they may live".

As I did my weekly shop on Friday, I had to queue with two meters between myself and others. We were all fearful of being breathed on by someone carrying the coronavirus. For too many people, being breathed on has brought about death. The Coronavirus is spread through human breath – it can lead to death, but the breath of God brings life. God formed Adam and breathed life into him. Both the Hebrew and the Greek words for breath, also mean spirit. God breathes His Spirit into us and gives us life, if only we will let Him.

In verse 11, God says that the people will say, "Our hope is lost; we are cut off completely". In these days of social distancing and particularly self isolation, these words can ring all too true. We may feel cut off completely, but God is with us – our hope is not lost. Despite the strangeness, the difficulties, and for some, the grief that coronavirus brings, God is with us, as Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, so God still weeps at our suffering, He is with us in that suffering, and if we let Him, He will breathe life into us. If you are feeling spiritually dead, your faith having been knocked by fear or grief, ask God to breathe His Spirit into you, enlivening your failing faith. If you have lost a loved one, know that the resurrection is real. Lazarus was raised, Jesus was raised; It's true! The disciples would never have risked their lives and suffered martyrdom for a lie. We speak of lost loved ones but they are not lost to God, they are in His care. So, take comfort in the knowledge that both spiritual and physical resurrection have been proven to be possible for God, trust in Him and receive His Spirit. Amen.