



William
Lambe
450th
anniversary

ST JAMES' CHURCH, ISLINGTON N1 8PF

29th March 2020 LENT 5 Year A 20/13

Jesus, during your ministry on earth you showed your power and caring by healing people of all ages and stations of life from physical, mental, and spiritual ailments. Be present now to people who need your loving touch because of COVID-19. May they feel your power of healing through the care of doctors and nurses. Take away the fear, anxiety and feelings of isolation from people receiving treatment or under quarantine. Give them a sense of purpose in keeping healthy and protecting others from exposure to the disease. Protect their families and friends and bring peace to all who love them; for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Collect: Almighty God, you chose a cross to reveal your love; may its breadth teach us to care for the world, its weight remind us to bear one another's burdens, and its height lift us with your Son, to the glory of your Kingdom, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LOCKDOWN MEANS LOCKDOWN!

To those of us who are rather used to making our own decisions, the ruling by the London bishops that our churches are not to be open for any purpose whatever - including private prayer and minimalist streaming of services - has come as something of a shock. So apologies if it is taking us a few days to try and unravel the plans we had made and to set up something different. But with Sinead's help there will be a service available on YouTube/Facebook at 10am on Sunday 29th (Passion Sunday) but it will be recorded inside the Vicarage not in Church. It will last about half an hour and will include the readings for the day, a Sermon and some prayers. Again the texts will be available on the website for you to download if you wish (see www.stjamesislington.org/news).

By next Sunday (April 5th) we hope to have got the technology working to the point where we can record the Sunday 10am service outside "in our (garden) studios in Arlington Square"! This will be a version of the Passion story traditionally read on this day - but with some meditations thrown in for you to explore too. Alongside all of this we are also wanting to keep our young people involved. Many of you will now have seen the Arena newsletter which is sent to everyone on the parish mailing list. The latest edition (number 58) had pictures of the craft work done by the children of our Sunday School. At the end of last week Maria and Sinead packed up craft materials for Mothering Sunday and distributed them to 25 households and nearly 40 children! We got some excellent feedback including a few great photographs (sent to stjamesN1sundayschool@hotmail.com). While half of the envelopes will now have to be sent though the post, the Sunday School team will continue to offer ideas to discuss and crafts to complete for as long as the Church is closed. If your child got missed off the list by accident - or if you don't want to receive these packs - then please let the Sunday School team know. We don't want to use more stamps than necessary!



TODAY IS PASSION SUNDAY and the time when the Church remembers the last two weeks of Jesus' life. If we were in Church we would see that all the crosses and statues have been covered in purple cloth - an ancient way of drawing attention to the cross ... by hiding it! During this week many Christians will try to read the Bible a bit more. As we prepare to read the Passion story can I recommend you read St Mark 12: 1-12.

St James' Islington: discovering how to live like Jesus in the 21st century

ONE MORE WEEK.. Despite Coronavirus there are still a couple of ordinary Church things to draw to your attention. The first is that next Sunday is the last day to receive new applications for the Electoral Roll - the Church of England's way of counting its membership. It is also a kind of guide to the level of support we have for all that we are doing at St James' so we do hope that newcomers will be willing to sign up: an increased Electoral Roll makes us all feel a lot better! I have asked Vera Taggart to send forms to those I hope will apply: please get them back to me or to her asap. Next Sunday (5th April) is also the date by which we are hoping you will return the green Stewardship Renewal pledge forms to Nieve Goodwin. There is no getting around the fact that 2020 is going to be economically disastrous for the parish as so much of our income comes from outside bookings which are suspended during the current crisis. If older members can give more and newcomers can start to give on a regular basis it will all help us to cope with what is a really difficult financial challenge.

ZOOM! Isabel has recently introduced me to Zoom. Many of you will know about it already but it is one of the latest (and best) ways of people being able to meet together 'on line'. With just a few clicks it is now very easy to hold discussions and even formal meetings and I think this will be the way forward for many for whom getting out in the house is difficult. We are proposing using it for a discussion on our Lent book 'Luminaries'. Watch out for details.

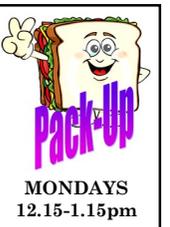
Calendar and Daily Prayer themes

Sun 29	PASSION SUNDAY	Wendy Fisher-Gordon; Maria Flavius
Mon 30	DEL Lent 5	Ros, Chris, Beatrix and Sebastian Ford
Tues 31	John Donne	Nick, Felicity, Eve Fryer; Mark and Shireen Gilbert
Wed 1	FD Maurice	Karensa and Amariah Greenaway; Lucy Haire, Sam
Thurs 2	Feria	Jill Hetherington; Paul Hills; Mark and Norah Hodge
Fri 3	Feria	Rebecca, Rob and Eve Holtom; Alastair Hume; Kris Hyde
Sat 4	Feria	Matt, Nicole and Eve Jean-Baptiste; Grace, Elrose Joseph
Sun 5	PALM SUNDAY	Barry, Hayley, Theo and Freddie Jenkins

PRAYER BOARD/NOTICES Requests for prayer welcome

- BIRTHDAY** Happy Returns today Matteo Falcioni who is 7; to Injy, and also to Benjy Payne, son of Louise and Vinny, whose days are on Friday - and finally to Andrew Smith at Holy Comforter, Angleton, Texas, who will be 5 on Saturday. Happy days all.
- SICK** Robert Addington, Annie Bryan, Chou Seng Joo, Emily Grainger, Eve Holtom, Kris Hyde, Hayley Jenkins, John, Klenan, Kingsley Lewis, John Scott, Charlie Sharpe, Rene, Vera Taggart, Melanie Toogood, Angela Vinnicombe.
- MEMORIALS** Today: Connie Young-Williams, Lily Amelia Nichol; 2nd: Mary Rainford.
- INTERNATIONAL CHURCH LINKS US:** Fr Travis and Suzanne Smith, Angleton, Texas; Japan: Fr Sebastian Naniwa, working in Hiroshima.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE What joy for Nazanin Zaghari-Radcliffe who has gained at least temporary release from Evin Jail in Tehran due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus. Despite having to wear a tag she is free at last to communicate freely with her husband Richard and their daughter Gabriella, back in Hampstead and to get some proper medical treatment while e living with her mother and father. Sadly we have heard nothing about Kylie Moore-Gilbert (left), a British-Australian academic, who seems to have been a persistent thorn in the flesh of the authorities. We also pray for two other British-Iranian dual nationals, Anooosheh Ashoori, a business man sentenced to twelve years and Aras Amiri, an Iranian employee of the British Council and student of philosophy at Kingston University, sentenced to ten years. Nazanin and Aras became very good friends in prison.



Parish Priest: Fr John Burniston 1a Arlington Square, N1 7DS 020 7226 4108 | 07989 281123
email: vicar@stjamesislington.org | www.stjamesislington.org | Administrator: admin@stjamesislington.org
Churchwardens: Hilary Roden and Isabel Nisbet | Hall Bookings: hallatstjames@gmail.com

SERVICE OF THE WORD FOR PASSION SUNDAY

The Preparation

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.
And also with you.

Words of welcome and introduction follow

The fifth Sunday of Lent marks the start of Passiontide in the Christian Calendar, the last two weeks of Jesus' life. It is the time when we think of all Jesus had to leave behind and all that he was familiar with. So perhaps this is a good time to be cut adrift from what has been normal for us too. Have we the courage to go beyond our comfort zone in these troubling days?

Our big story today, working alongside the Gospel story of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus after he had died suddenly, is taken from Ezekiel 37. In a vision the prophet is taken to a large plain which is thick with the bones of an army that has been wiped out by the Babylonians. It is only when Ezekiel follows God's instructions and fills them with breath that the bones come to life once more.

There are lots of exercises these days which encourage us to take note of our breathing. We don't need to be yoga experts to discover the benefits of controlling the speed with which we breathe. But we can also use it as a helpful guide to all that we are taking in - and all that we are giving out. Jesus reminded us in one of his parables that it is not what we absorb with our eyes and ears that mess us up, it is what we allow to come out.

So we start our service today by spending a few minutes to think of those things which we have not taken proper control of - the things we have said and done which have only too easily revealed the sinful state of our hearts and minds. Now is the time to breathe out our sin and to breathe in the love and mercy of God:

Confession

**Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned, against you and against our neighbour,
in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love and marred your image in us.
We are sorry and ashamed and repent of all our sins.**

**For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us,
forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light. Amen.**

May the God of all healing and forgiveness draw us to himself, and cleanse us for all our sins, that we may enjoy the glory of God and live in his presence all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Collect

**Almighty God, you chose a cross to reveal your love; may its
breadth teach us to care for the world, its weight remind us to bear
one another's burdens, and its height lift us with your Son, to the
glory of your Kingdom, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

The Word of God

1st Reading: (Ezekiel 37: 1-14 CEV) In a vision the Lord brought me to a deserted valley; and wherever I looked all I could see were bones. As I moved around I began to see just how many bones there were, and how dry they were. And then I heard the voice of the Lord and he said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I did not know what to say so I said that only he would know whether these bones could ever live again. Then he said to me, 'Speak to these bones! Say to them: 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord; listen to what the Lord God has to say to you. For I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live again. New sinews will appear and new flesh will cover you. I will fill you with breath and you shall live, Then you will know that I am the Lord.'

So I spoke to the bones as I had been commanded; and as I spoke, suddenly there was a noise, a mighty rattling, and the bones came together, one bone to another. And as I looked new sinews formed on the bones and new flesh appeared and covered the bodies; but there was no breath in them.

Then The Lord said to me: 'Speak to the breath and say: by the will of the Most High, come from the four winds, and breathe on these who were killed in battle so that they may live.' I spoke as the Lord had commanded me and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast army too many to count.

Then the Lord said to me, 'Mortal, understand this: these bones are the nation and House of Israel. Each day they complain, "our bones are dried up, and our future is hidden from us; we are as those without hope." Therefore speak to these people and say to them, 'This is what the Lord says to you: I am going to raise the dead and restore my people to health. You are mine and I will rescue you and bring you back home. I will renew your fortunes and you shall be at peace.

And after I have raised the dead and restored you to health, I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live. You will flourish once more in the place which I have given you. Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will give you all that you desire.'

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation:

**Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory
I am the resurrection and the life, says the Lord;
whoever believes in me will never die.
Praise to you, O Christ, King of eternal glory**

(St John 11: 1-45 CEV) Jesus was in Trans-Jordan when news came that his great friend Lazarus was ill. Lazarus lived in Bethany with his sisters Martha and Mary. It was Mary who had famously anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair.

The sisters had sent a message to Jesus saying 'the one whom you love is ill.' But when Jesus heard it, he said, 'This illness will not lead to death but to the revelation of God's greatness so that the Son of God may be glorified.' So although Jesus loved Martha. Mary and their brother Lazarus, he stayed two days longer in the place where he has been preaching.

Only then did Jesus say to the disciples, 'Let us return to Judea.' But the disciples were anxious. They said to him, 'Rabbi, it is only recently that the Jews were trying to stone you; are you going there again?'

Jesus answered, 'Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not come to any harm because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night, they fall into danger because the light is not in them.'

Changing the subject, he then said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to wake him up'. The disciples said to him, 'Lord, if he has only fallen asleep all will be well.' The disciples still thought that Jesus was referring to Lazarus being asleep.

Then Jesus told them what he had really meant: 'Lazarus is dead. I am glad I was not there because it is God's will that you see and then believe. Come, it is time to go to Bethany.'

Thomas, who was also called the Twin, sensing the danger Jesus was in said, 'Let us also go with the Lord, even if we have to die with him.'

When Jesus arrived at the house of Lazarus and his sisters, he found that Lazarus had already been buried for four days.

Bethany was just two miles from Jerusalem and many had come to comfort Martha and Mary. When Martha heard that Jesus was on his way she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again at the general resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, they will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.'

Martha then left Jesus and went back to the house to speak to her sister Mary. 'The Teacher is here' she said, 'and he is calling for you.' Mary got up quickly and met Jesus just outside the village. Those who had been at the house mourning with the family also got up and followed her.

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was standing she fell on her knees and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw Mary and all her companions weeping, he was greatly moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.'

Jesus also began to cry. Those who were watching said 'See how he loved him!' But some of them said, 'If he could make the blind see, surely he could kept this man from dying?'

Jesus, still greatly distressed, walked on to the rock where a cave had been formed to make a tomb for Lazarus. A large stone lay over the entrance. Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' But Martha was anxious: 'Lord, he has been dead for four days and already there is a terrible smell'. Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone.

Standing by the tomb Jesus looked up to heaven. 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' To their astonishment the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a long bandage. Jesus said to them, 'Take the grave clothes off him and let him go.'

Many of those who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON FOR PASSION SUNDAY/LENT 5 | 29.03.2020

Ezekiel 37: 1-14; Romans 8: 6-11; St John 11: 1-45

There used to be a funny cartoon of this passage from Ezekiel.

I don't know if it is still around but it showed the prophet Ezekiel stretching out his hands over a valley of dry bones. And no sooner has he done this than a great mass of cartoon bones suddenly begins to whizz around - at great speed and in straight, geometric lines - until all the ivory limbs make up complete skeletons again. Then, finally, as of a piece, there is a great clanking and groaning as all the bodies stand up, somewhat unsteadily, so that they are vertical once more - like the army they had once been before the Babylonians had hacked them down in some forgotten battle. I can't help but hear the noise of those rattling bones every time I read this passage!

But this is a vision and Ezekiel isn't, actually, very interested in dry bones except as the background to what happens next. These bones, these dry bones - represented a nation that had forgotten about the power of God. It could only live and move once the spirit - the ruach, the living breath of the Most High - had come back and restored them to life. With God's spirit, dry bones could become living people.

With nothing better to do these days (!) I have had time to watch a couple of 'Ted Talks'. Many of you will have seen them. I think they are filmed in Vancouver and each speaker delivers a ten minute piece on their favourite educational topic. The subject range is vast and covers every subject under the sun but one caught my eye in particular this week. It was called *Cathedral Thinking* and the speaker was someone called Rick Antonson.

The essence of *Cathedral Thinking* is that these great historic buildings take so long to complete – sometimes hundreds of years – that the people who lay the foundations know that they will never see their work finished. Their grandchildren might, but those who start the work won't. And yet without their vision for the future and their willingness to put in lifetimes of skill and determination, we wouldn't have any of these great Cathedrals we enjoy today.

Rick tells the story of a great 800 year Cathedral where the wooden beams were beginning to fail. And the surveyor goes to the forester and says, do you have any trees big enough to replace them?

And the forester smiles and says, *We've been waiting for you to come. Hundreds of years ago the trees you can see around you were planted for this very day to arrive. We have just what you need.*

As an historian - and someone with a love of old buildings – such stories warm my heart. I love the idea that there were people with foresight, people who would plant those saplings that would grow to be mighty oaks many generations later. But as a Christian I love the story even more because we have a picture of people who had an overwhelming trust in God and a confidence that these great buildings would not only survive but would also flourish in the future.

Greta Thunberg has also adopted her own form of *Cathedral Thinking*. Speaking the day after the fire which destroyed so much of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, she asked whether the medieval foundations would still be strong enough to rebuild the rest?

And by extension she then asked: will the foundations we have laid to stop climate change be strong enough to avoid the very significant tipping point in about 2030 – when the effects of global warming, the melting of the polar ice caps, the pollution of our air and seas and the destruction of millions of species of insects and animals so familiar today, will simply be irreversible? Can we, she pleads, lay better foundations now, whether we will live to see the outcome or not?

The writer Max Hastings has a slightly different take on *Cathedral thinking*. In his view the current generation of leaders – anyone, say, from 45 upwards – has been so cossetted and so selfish (his list includes free education and health care, abundant food and restriction-free travel) that they (we?) should now be willing to submit to the new generation of leaders, doing as much as we can to make up for what we have taken - by consuming less and demanding less - because otherwise our children and our children's children will be saddled with an economic debt that will be simply too big for them to shoulder. Visionary *Cathedral thinking*, according to Hastings, requires us to look at the future – and to calculate just what kind of a broken legacy we are leaving behind.

Ezekiel looks down at the valley and, in his vision, sees what happens when there is no spiritual life left. The bones are bleached white from ignoring God, from short-termism, from the determination to look after ourselves whatever the outcome. These are the spiritless people who refused to grow oaks for the next generation.

As we start Passiontide, as we start to walk with Jesus in his final two weeks on this earth; as we begin to explore what his ministry means for today's world, we are bound to ask the question: was there a plan to his life – or was he just coping with all that was thrown at him as best he could? Was there any *Cathedral thinking* in the Jesus project?

And the answer we get in this very long story about Lazarus! As usual St John makes us work to get any clear consistent message but it is there if we look.

Right there, among the obvious emotion of losing one of his closest friends, Jesus spells out how God works.

The back story is that, quite unexpectedly, Jesus' great friend Lazarus has died and Jesus has to deal with his own feelings as well as those of Martha and Mary who have been like a family to him for the last three years. And in these dreadful circumstances Martha can't stop herself: *Lord, if you had been here Lazarus would not have died.* Such was her trust in Jesus she could not imagine that he would have let Lazarus die. If Jesus had been there it would all have been sorted. What a shame he had been somewhere else.

To which Jesus sounds rather like any preacher: *Your brother will rise again.*

But that isn't what Martha wants to hear. *I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day...* she mumbles. She doesn't want the abstract theological stuff she wants her brother back.

And further on, standing at Lazarus' grave, when Jesus tells them to move the stone, Martha is still obsessed with the smell of a three-day-old dead body. *Somebody do something; make this nightmare go away...*

But how can Jesus show them the glory of God unless they have gone through real loss first? *Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.* And before their eyes, there is Lazarus walking out of the tomb, still in his grave clothes. *And many, seeing these things, put their faith in him.*

Of course Jesus knew, and you and I know, that this episode was just a dress rehearsal for the events on Calvary on Good Friday. Bringing Lazarus back to life, the Lazarus that he loved so much, was a way for Jesus to show his closest friends that he also had a plan. And Jesus' *Cathedral-style thinking* was predicated on his belief that only a fraction of what he wanted could be completed in his life time. As he said, *you will do far greater things in the future.*

Jesus' whole game plan was to prepare his disciples for the day that his death would lead to Resurrection - and Resurrection to the gift of ruach, Ezekiel's 'breath of life', the Holy Spirit that would make it possible, generation by generation, for the Kingdom of God to be built here on earth. In just the same way as Ezekiel's dead bones came together into a mighty army, so the Spirit of God would call into being a new army - the family of God, the Church.

And that Spirit would tell them that they were there to serve – not primarily themselves – but those who came after them. That is why we make such a fuss in our Christian story-telling of Abraham. From being fatherless, through the hugely difficult time when he was about to murder his only Son Isaac, Abraham was - over and over again - called 'the father of many nations'. He himself wouldn't see any of this great family; all he knew was that God wanted them to exist – for this great family to go on growing, way into the future.

In philosophical terms *Cathedral thinking* is not a new idea, nor is it originally a religious one. It has been talked about for at least a century – with varying degrees of interest. But for us as Christians it is really helpful as a way of reminding us that God has a plan, albeit a strange one which would include resurrection, freedom and joy – but also the challenge of not knowing how the future would evolve.

In our own local context *Cathedral thinking* helps to remind us that the work we do at St James' is as much (if not more) for future generations as it is for us in the here and now. It asks us to think what oaks we need to be planting now so that our successors will have what they need to succeed.

But we can only do that if we have the faith of Abraham – that there will be future generations in St James', congregations of all ages *more numerous than the sands of the sea.*

As I said last week, one of our prevailing sins is the belief that the Church is fast disappearing to nothing – even though history would tell us otherwise! I am sure they were equally nervous in the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries when they were thinking of building our great churches. I bet there were dry bones kinds of people even then who wanted to screw down the lid and keep the money in the bank!

As we defend the St James' Islington Organ Project against those who think that such an investment is a waste of money, I hope that we will remember that funny cartoon with all the dead bones coming to life.

Cathedral thinking is nothing less than being filled with confidence that in the future, new armies of disciples - filled with God's Spirit - will gladly build on what we have started.

The Prayers

Come, Lord, like the wind, move us and direct us.
Come as the breath of life; fill us and refresh us.
Come to your Church which, without you is dull and dry
and fill us with your Spirit.
Call us out of death and darkness into resurrection light and love

Come, Lord, restore and renew us; **in your love revive us.**

We pray that in these testing times we may find new ways of 'being Church';
we pray for all those who befriend us and encourage us,
those whose insights restore our perspective
and those who train our eyes to look outwards to the needs of others.

Come, Lord, restore and renew us; **in your love revive us.**

We give thanks for all those who are reaching out to neighbours
and for centres caring for the vulnerable and the homeless.
We thank you for all those working in the NHS
and for those coming out of retirement and returning to work.

We pray for administrators building new hospital facilities
and for those in the financial services rescheduling loans and mortgages,
rents and benefit payments.

Come, Lord, restore and renew us; **in your love revive us.**

We pray for friends and families from whom we are separated;
for NHS staff who are worn out by the demands being made on them;
we pray for all those without work
and those concerned about how to make ends meet.
We remember parents coping with the pressure of caring for children at home;
for children concerned about the wellbeing of sick and elderly parents;
We pray for those who are self-employed
and for all who feel isolated and alone.

Come, Lord, restore and renew us; **in your love revive us.**

We give thanks for all who have set un an example of love
and who have now entered into your greater glory.
We pray for the souls of Diane Taylor and Josie McGovern,
laid to rest this week, and for Connie Young-Williams, Lily Nichol and Mary
Rainford whose anniversaries fall about this time.
May we be inspired by their lives as we seek to live to your praise and glory.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Circle us, Lord. Keep your protection near and danger afar.

Circle us, Lord. Keep hope within, keep doubt without.

Circle us, Lord. Keep joy near and sorrow afar.

Circle us, Lord. Keep peace within, keep evil out.