

SERMON FOR MAY 20, 2018

TEXT: EZEKIEL 37:1-14

THEME: DRY BONES

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

In the name of Jesus:

Growing up I remember learning a children's song based on Ezekiel 37. The song was called Dem Bones, which was an old African American Spiritual. I can't remember the melody but the words ring in my memory to this day: "Ezekiel cried, "Dem dry bones!"Ezekiel cried, "Dem dry bones!"Ezekiel cried, "Dem dry bones!" "Oh, hear the word of the Lord."The toe bone connected to the heel bone, The heel bone connected to the foot bone, The foot bone connected to the leg bone, The leg bone connected to the knee bone, The knee bone connected to the thigh bone, The thigh bone connected to the back bone, The back bone connected to the neck bone, The neck bone connected to the head bone, Oh, hear the word of the Lord! Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk around. Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk

around. Dem bones, dem bones gonna walk around. Now hear the word of the Lord.”

Ezekiel 37 is probably one of the most well known chapters of the Bible, as the first 14 verses speak of God bringing dry bones to life. Previous to this, Ezekiel spoke to the sin of pride and arrogance of people. God’s people thought that they knew more than God’s messengers and more than God Himself! So, after speaking God’s word of judgment upon those who were proud and arrogant, the Holy Spirit brought Ezekiel out into the middle of a valley that was full of bones in the nation of Babylon. The Spirit of the Lord led Ezekiel all around the perimeter of the area where these bones were, and Ezekiel noticed that they were dry, very dry. The Holy Spirit then asks Ezekiel a question: Can these bones live? And Ezekiel answered, O, Lord, you know, for you know everything. Then the Holy Spirit said to Ezekiel: “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

Now that is exactly what takes place. The bones rattle, the muscle is formed around the bones, flesh covers muscle, the Spirit breathes life into

this dead lump of clay and lo and behold that which was dead comes to life! Ezekiel spoke God's Word, and God brought life to these dry bones by the power of His spoken Word. The breath came into the very dry bones and these bones lived, stood on their feet, and became a great army for the Lord!

So the good old Lutheran question is: What does this mean? The Lord interprets this for Ezekiel and for us in verses 11-14. The Bible says that we are all spiritually dead, lifeless, like very dry bones. We have no life within us, nothing to make us acceptable to God, we are spiritually dead, enemies of God. We are without hope, we are cut off from God. The bones that Ezekiel beholds are not just representative of the whole nation of Israel at that time, they also represent you and me and everyone in the Church today. None of us are perfect, no one is sinless, no one is right before God. What we earn as a result of our sinfulness is death, temporal death and eternal death and separation from God. We are a people without hope, a Church and congregation without hope for we are by nature poor, miserable sinners who deserve nothing good from God, only His wrath and punishment. These bones these bones these dry bones represent you and me in our natural state before God.

But hear the Word of the Lord! God has had mercy on sinners in that He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, from heaven to earth to save sinners. Jesus did this by His innocent life, His sacrificial death, and resurrection

from the dead. After His Ascension into heaven, our Lord kept His promise of sending the Holy Spirit, ““But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.” The Holy Spirit shows you that you need a Savior for He tells the truth about you, that you are no good, wretched, spiritually dead and an enemy of God. The work of the Spirit is to: convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to show you your sins so that you might know that you need a Savior. On this day of Pentecost, the Spirit reminds us of who He is and what He has done and continues to do to make us not only children of God, but alive in Him to live lives to the glory of God. For Jesus says: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The Spirit takes what it Jesus' and gives it to you. The forgiveness that Jesus won on the cross is given to you by the power of the Spirit in your Baptism. Hear the Word of the Lord for your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives you this forgiveness as He works through the Word and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. And just as Jesus rose from the grave on Easter morning, so also Jesus gives you new life by the power of His Spirit so that you live not for yourself but you live for God. To be sure, life is filled with its own sets of problems. The culture beckons us to conform to sin. Satan tempts us to deny Christ. Our sinful nature tells us to do things our own way. But God sends to us His Spirit, to point us and lead us to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is at work today! God's Word is always living and active. The Holy Spirit today gives you life through the Word that you hear with your ears and receive on your lips in the Lord's Supper. The Holy Spirit is now living and active in your life so that you can give the life giving message of Jesus to others. And this is so that what the Bible says will be fulfilled in your life: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.¹² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

None of us stands alone or lives alone, we all stand together and live together in Jesus Christ, united by the Holy Spirit in our Baptism so that we will be living our lives for Jesus. You are a part of the mighty army of God, marching on to war, with the cross of Jesus going on before! Because of the Holy Spirit we know that Jesus is the Lord, that He speaks to us today in the Word, and that the Holy Spirit will accomplish what He wills in your life, to the glory of God and in the name of Jesus.

Amen