

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Pentecost Sunday – May 19, 2024

*“And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live,
and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord;
I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.”*

–Ezekiel 37:14–

Can you picture the scene in your mind? It is dry and desolate. There is no source of water. No trees or plants. You are at the foot of a valley, and there you come upon a scene that is dreadful and hopeless. All around you are bones—dry bones. If you weren’t feeling alone and hopeless in a desolate place already, you will now as you are surrounded by the stark reminder of death. As God shows this vision to Ezekiel, certainly it seemed a hopeless situation, full of great despair.

We have had moments in our lives, where we have felt in a valley full of death, hopelessness, dry bones, and despair. It can be overwhelming, and it threatens to take our focus from what really matters—what’s at the heart of this passage from chapter 37. For Ezekiel, he was losing hope for the nation of Israel. He was beginning to think Israel was a lost cause. God first addresses Ezekiel as, “Son of Man,” or in other translations, “Mortal,” emphasizing Ezekiel’s humanness. Ezekiel, like the rest of us, will face death one day as all humans have and will. God asks mortal Ezekiel if the bones can live. Anyone looking at the bleached white bones would know that the people these bones once represented, are long past any hope of life. Or so it seems.

Ezekiel responds that only God really knows if the bones can live or not. God commands Ezekiel to speak God’s word faithfully over these dry bones. And so God uses Ezekiel as his instrument, and as Ezekiel speaks God’s word, breathes new life into what once appeared dead. The bones come together, and God creates new life in them.

On this Day of Pentecost, we are reminded that God has given his Holy Spirit to us as a gift. Nothing we do, not even our faithfulness, can give us the promised life in Jesus Christ. Only God can breathe life into us through his Holy Spirit. Certainly, we can call to mind various times when all hope may have seemed lost. These verses from Ezekiel, however, affirm for us a message of hope. Even now in 2024, we don’t have to look far to find news headlines that have the power to fill us with despair. But the power of God can transform and renew. As we look back on the history of the church, we know that’s true. God is faithful and good; he alone gives us new life in him.

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