

Ezekiel 37:1-17

37The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. ²He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. ³He said to me, ‘Mortal, can these bones live?’ I answered, ‘O Lord GOD, you know.’ ⁴Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶I will lay sinews on 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.’

7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. ⁹Then he said to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’ ¹⁰I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

11 Then he said to me, ‘Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.” ¹²Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.’

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It sounds so simple: “Prophecy to these bones...” the word of God to the prophet of God in what seemed like godless times. A good talking to, it seems, will bring barren bones to life again; Would that it were so.

Our leaders and health care professionals are talking. “Stay home – stay safe,” they say. We who listen – truly listen – are mildly inconvenienced, but able to contribute to the ability to deal with this crisis. In this way, words that are well heeded bring life and hope. And this is GOSPEL work.

Good news isn’t always sunshine and roses. Sometimes, good news is about the best thing to do in the worst possible situation. Good news is about long-term hope and collective good. Ezekiel’s experience in the valley of the dead is a stunningly visual example of that.

We are bearers of Gospel – good news that originates out of the nightmare scenario of the cross of Jesus. We stand against the horror of that moment and proclaim “God is love” and “Christ is Risen”

extraordinary claims in the face of a brutal reality. Our proclamation in these times is no less extraordinary; no less radical; no less hopeful.

In a world brought to near standstill by a microscopic virus with global ambitions, the church is slowly but surely becoming the church as Jesus may have imagined it to be – open; creative; flexible; caring; courageous. This is good news in the face of our current, brutal reality.

May our actions and our continued witness breathe life and hope into these days of anxiety and uncertainty. Amen

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A prayer for the week:

Your Word, O God, separated light from darkness and called order out of Creations chaos.

Speak that word of life to us in the chaos of this moment.

Where there are now limits, help us to see new possibilities.

Where there is anxiety, let us be honest about it, and trust your calming Spirit to speak.

Where there is sickness, bring healing and courage.

Where there is mourning, may you bring comfort.

In our separation, help us recognize those common cares we share.

Keep us connected. Keep us hopeful.

Keep us.

Amen

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Be assured of the Peace that God has promised, which is yours now and always through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen