

## “Old Dry Bones”

Ezekiel 37:1-14, John 11:1-45  
9 March 2008, 4th Sunday of Lent  
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Ezekiel 37:1-14

The 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. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I 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.”

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. I 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. Then 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.’ I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

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.” Therefore 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. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I 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.’

Prayer.

The prophet Ezekiel has a vision.  
Marooned with the rest of the nation  
in Babylonian captivity  
encamped on the shores of the Tigris,  
all was thought to be lost.  
They had lived courting sin,

and now they were paying the  
consequences  
with their defeat and captivity.  
Though angered,  
God remained engaged.  
God did not abandon,  
as we would have been tempted.  
God remained at their side.

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There still remained hope.

God used Ezekiel as his spokesman;  
a mouthpiece to all of Israel.  
God gave Ezekiel a vision;  
this captivating conception  
of old dry bones being fully restored  
- knit back together -  
and the breath of God  
becoming the life that is breathed into  
their lungs.  
Though decayed and scattered  
- beyond all hope of what we would call  
any possibility of resuscitation -  
God continued to see the potential  
of life  
in the midst of death.  
Even where human hope would fail  
divine hope remains steadfast.  
When surrounded by nothing but death  
God is able to find life.

“My people” God proclaims,  
not as a disapproving, disowning,  
punitive parent,  
but as a claiming and naming,  
benevolent Sovereign;  
a loving Parent who never lost hope.  
“O my people; ... I will bring you back”  
to the land of the living.  
From death to life  
you are restored.  
“O my people; ... I will bring you back”  
to the land I had previously given you.  
From exile to home  
you are restored.  
“O my people; ... I will bring you back”  
to the way you were  
before sin tore us apart;  
before any memory of sin existed  
and divided us.  
Hope comes from the promise

of a new start with our Divine Intimate.  
Just as there is more to vision than  
seeing,  
so too, is there more to living  
than being brought back from death.  
While vision is limited by  
the surrounding environment,  
Seeing,  
truly seeing,  
goes beyond the limits of vision;  
Seeing is what we call faith.  
Seeing allows the self  
an awareness of God’s presence;  
an awareness of God’s fidelity;  
an awareness of God’s final hope for  
every soul.  
If one does not see,  
hope is lost,  
killed off by death’s final breath.

Living,  
grasping life for all it’s fullness,  
is more than heart beat and respirations.  
Living is more than benevolence and  
good works.  
Living is more than recessitation,  
being brought back by the miracles of  
Jesus  
(as Jesus did raising Lazarus in today’s  
Gospel).  
Living is more than  
the application of modern science  
to lengthen the lifespan.  
Living is believing in Jesus Christ;  
and this kind of living  
goes beyond the grave.  
Living transcends all mortal constraints  
and frees us to  
live eternally  
with Christ,  
in his kingdom.

It never ceases to amaze me  
of the multitudes who are content  
to allow death to be the final word.  
The attitude of  
“Life is a beach,  
and then you die”  
is so utterly foreign and fatalistic  
that I can not even begin to comprehend  
such depressive thoughts.  
These are the people who see a pile of  
old dry bones  
and only see  
the rotted remains of a corps,  
decaying, cold death.  
They never see life,  
the life that was lived,  
or the potential  
of the eternal life  
that God is recreating  
when He makes these old dry bones  
to come together,  
knit with sinew and flesh,  
and have the breath of the Holy Spirit  
breathed into lifeless lungs.

It never ceases to amaze me  
that ancient institutions  
can become so wed to old dry bones  
that war is justified  
by those who follow Moses, Allah, or  
Christ.  
We bury those old bones  
with the pageantry of doctrine, violence  
and oppression.  
Speaking peace  
while arming to the teeth,  
proclaiming justice  
while practicing segregation,  
and espousing equality  
while lying, cheating, and hoarding our  
way to the top  
makes of ourselves

detestable hypocrites,  
bent on preserving those old dry bones,  
instead of delivering those bones  
for God to transform  
and create new life.

Living is believing  
that God isn't done even with old dry  
bones.  
All John's stories end with belief:  
the man born blind,  
the woman at the well,  
those fed in the desert;  
every miracle is an opportunity  
for Jesus to give sight to the blind  
and belief to the living.

I do not believe in Jesus  
because I have witnessed miracles,  
though, I must truthfully say,  
I have witnessed countless miracles  
stemming from God's intervention.  
I believe in Jesus because  
I know there are other worlds beyond  
what I can merely see.  
I believe in Jesus because  
I know there are old dry bones  
surrounding us in the here and now  
that have a story to tell,  
and that, one day, I have every  
expectation  
new life will be breathed into them  
in the world to come.  
I believe in Jesus because  
I know that one day,  
my old, creaky bones  
will fail to support life,  
but will become the essences for God  
to recreate into eternal life.

Living is believing in Jesus Christ;  
and this kind of living

goes beyond the grave.

Open your eyes  
and begin to see with more than mere  
vision.

Open your mind  
and know that living is more than a  
family, a job, and a paycheck.

Open your heart  
and allow your old bones  
live again,  
live eternally,  
with Christ,  
in His kingdom.  
Amen.