

Lifting our souls, Trusting in God

LENT AND EASTER COURSE FROM THE
DIOCESE OF ABERDEEN AND ORKNEY

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.

COLLECT

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us with the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



Resurrection of the Dead (c. 1250) Enamel Victoria and Albert Museum

“But what had lasting significance were not the miracles themselves but Jesus' love. Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead, and a few years later, Lazarus died again. Jesus healed the sick, but eventually caught some other disease. He fed the ten thousands, and the next day they were hungry again. But we remember his love. It wasn't that Jesus healed a leper but that he touched a leper, because no one touched lepers.” – Shane Claiborne

“It makes me think of Lazarus. He must have had those shadows after his miracle. You don't spend time in the tomb without it changing you, and everyone who was waiting for you to come out.” – Sara Zarr

The readings for the Fifth Sunday of Lent (also known as Passion Sunday) all speak of life, death and resurrection. In the Old Testament reading God promises to resurrect and return God's people to Israel, affirming the identity and power of God. God vows to infuse them with the holy spirit, assuring fulfilment of this promise. Ezekiel 37 also points to God's power over death and despair. The Spirit God breathes into the people is the same Spirit that brings life and identity

In this passage from Ezekiel, there is a poignant description of dry bones strewn across a valley. Under Ezekiel's watchful eye, these bones suddenly reassemble themselves in a great clatter, then are strapped with sinew and flesh and skin, and, finally, reanimated with a breath called forth from the four winds.

Today you're invited to read the passage from Ezekiel, the poem by George Herbert on the next page and perhaps listen to the song suggestions below. As you reflect how does the prophecy of the dry bones demonstrate the power of God's Word? and in what ways might you need a 'breath of life' in your personal or spiritual life?

To Listen:

Come Alive (Dry Bones) by Lauren Daigle
Dem Bones James Weldon Johnson & J. Rosamond Johnson

A playlist of music suggestions for the course can be found at <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3pJcG5xAlxzhL2Aolau0Q4?si=582cd1f921ae4fb1>



Resurrection of the Dead (c. 1250) Enamel Victoria and Albert Museum

“But what had lasting significance were not the miracles themselves but Jesus' love. Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead, and a few years later, Lazarus died again. Jesus healed the sick, but eventually caught some other disease. He fed the ten thousands, and the next day they were hungry again. But we remember his love. It wasn't that Jesus healed a leper but that he touched a leper, because no one touched lepers.” – Shane Claiborne

“It makes me think of Lazarus. He must have had those shadows after his miracle. You don't spend time in the tomb without it changing you, and everyone who was waiting for you to come out.” – Sara Zarr

Death by George Herbert

Death, thou wast once an uncouth hideous thing,
Nothing but bones,
The sad effect of sadder groans:
Thy mouth was open, but thou couldst not sing.

For we considered thee as at some six
Or ten years hence,
After the loss of life and sense,
Flesh being turned to dust, and bones to sticks.

We looked on this side of thee, shooting short;
Where we did find
The shells of fledged souls left behind,
Dry dust, which sheds no tears, but may extort.

But since our Saviour's death did put some blood
Into thy face,
Thou art grown fair and full of grace,
Much in request, much sought for as a good.

For we do now behold thee gay and glad,
As at Doomsday;
When souls shall wear their new array,
And all thy bones with beauty shall be clad.

Therefore we can go die as sleep, and trust
Half that we have
Unto an honest faithful grave;
Making our pillows either down, or dust.