

SERMON FOR SUN. MAY 23, 2021

Guest Pastor Fish

2021 Pentecost B

Ezekiel 37:1-14

“Can these bones live?”

James Weldon Johnson was early 20th century African American poet, author, song writer and civil rights activist. One of his most famous works is found in our Lutheran Hymnal, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. Another one of his works is based on our Old Testament reading for today. The song begins *Ezekiel cried dem dry bones...you know how it continues, your toe bone connected to your foot bone, etc.* It is really a commentary on the vision The Lord gave to his prophet Ezekiel. On this Pentecost Sunday we see the work of the Holy Spirit as we answer the question

Can these bones live?

I. Sometimes things seem impossible.

A. In his vision saw a valley filled with bones. It was the place of a massacre. These weren't just the bones of recently killed people. These were *dem dry bones*, all that was left after death and decay had had their way. No hope of resuscitation. They were a grim reminder of lives that once were but can never be again.

B. Worse, the Lord reveals to Ezekiel that *these bones are the house of Israel*, butchered by her enemies. They lie dead under God's judgement and wrath.

C. As it was for Israel, so it is for you. Remember the Lord's solemn word to Adam *In the day you eat of the fruit you shall surely die.*” Through Adam's sin we also inherit his death. In Genesis 5 we hear the grim refrain he lived and then he died. We have lost loved ones and we and we know that our day is coming. Physical death is unavoidable. And worse, we are dead in our sins and face an eternity in hell. So the question God asks Ezekiel can haunt us. **Can these bones live?**

II. What is impossible for man is always possible for our God!

A. There is an old Reformation altar piece which is really unique. It shows Jesus hanging on the cross, but the cross has been erected over a skull. The blood of Jesus drips down on top of it. The skull is Adam's. The artist wanted to visually portray that the shed blood of Jesus brings life to Adam and his descendants, right down to you and me. His shed blood **redeems** us from our sins, **rescues** us from the power of the devil and **restores** us in the relationship that God intended from the beginning. Jesus' death on the cross earns new life. His resurrection guarantees it. But how do we know it?

B. We know it through the power of

God's proclaimed Word. The word proclaimed through the Holy Spirit.

III. Where the Lord's word is, there the Spirit give life in His in His Name.

A. The Spirit is "*the Lord and Giver of Life.*" The Spirit was there at creation bringing life out of chaos. He was there on Resurrection evening as Jesus breathed on His disciples giving them peace and joy. And 50 days later on Pentecost, that same Spirit was poured out on faithful Jews from many nations bringing them to faith in the crucified and risen Savior Jesus Christ. That Spirit brings life in 2 ways.

B. First, God promises a spiritual resurrection. When Israel cries, "*our bones are dried and our hope is lost.*" Through the Spirit-breathed gift of faith they could receive the gift of new life and once again know the True God who was always with them. When we cry "*God be merciful to me a sinner*" the words of absolution brings to us in words of forgiveness, Every baptism in the name of our Triune God is a continuation of that first Pentecost event bringing new souls into the family of God

C. But there is also a physical resurrection. Just as *Ezekiel connected dem dry bones*, and the bones were covered with tendons, flesh and skin, God promised *Israel would again come to life.* So for us on the Last Day, *the trumpet will sound and our dead bones with be raised incorruptible*, no longer tainted by sin.

There are many names for the plot of ground where bodies are buried. Words like the crass boneyard, to graveyard or memorial park are mentioned. My favorite is cemetery. It comes for the Greek word *koimeterion* which means "*resting place.*" That's what the bones of the faithful who die in Christ do. They sleep until Jesus returns to raise them again to life. So, **can these bones live?** By the power of the Lord and giver of life who brings us to faith in our crucified and risen Savior, **ABSOLUTELY! Amen.**