

## Sermon for May 23, 2021

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### (Mini-Message Part 1, following First Reading)

Have you ever asked someone a question you already knew the answer for? Maybe you even asked with the intention of it nudging the other person to see things your way. For example, I can hear myself asking my children – Is that really a good idea? Posed like a question, it is really parent speech for “Oh my goodness child...you need to rethink and see things my way.”

In our First Reading today I think God is using just such a technique with Ezekiel and the people of Israel. The Lord has set Ezekiel down in the valley of dry bones and asks “Mortal, can these bones live?” Is God really asking Ezekiel the question because God needs to know the answer?

Throughout scripture we hear God ask questions that aren’t designed to get God needed answers but rather provide mortals with the opportunity to rethink and see things the way God sees things. God asks Adam and Eve “Where are you?” Clearly God knows but God gives them the chance to come forward in confession. Right after his resurrection Jesus asks the disciples on the Road to Emmaus “What are you talking about?” And when they don’t recognize him they say “The things that have taken place in Jerusalem to Jesus of Nazareth,” Jesus himself asks “What things?” The question gives the disciples a chance to remember the story of their faith. If you go on a scavenger hunt you will find God’s questioning all over the Old and New Testament. Why is this question posed to Ezekiel: “Mortal, can these bones live?”

Ezekiel is a prophet to the house of Israel, a people who have lost hope, lost faith, lost a vision that can see life in what feels like a valley of death. Circumstances have exhausted and dried up their spirits. If asked “Can you live? Can there continue to be life here?” the people would have groaned.

Note that God starts his question by addressing Ezekiel as “Mortal.” God knows that the mortal eyes of the people of Israel cannot see beyond the dry bones and with the following question seems to say “Oh my goodness child...you need to rethink and see things my way.” Ezekiel responds correctly “O Lord God, you know.”

“Can these dry bones live?” God knows. God has vision that exceeds mortal eyes. The question invites Ezekiel and the people of Israel to rethink and strive to see things God’s way. Where have your mortal lives come from in the first place? In the creation story we read God breathed into the dust of the earth and mortal beings lived. God stands in the valley of dry bones and says once again “I cause breath to enter you and you shall live”; to the people of Israel “I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live.”

“Mortal, can these dry bones live?” In the question God reminds us who we are as mortals and who God is – “Oh my goodness child... you need to rethink and see things my way.”

Coming out of this past year, a year in the valley of dry bones – pandemic, racial injustice, deep divisions and fear – God asks “Mortal, can these dry bones live?” We remember sharply our mortality but also God’s divinity. In our hesitancy and doubt, as we wonder about life in the future we are to be like Ezekiel - “Oh Lord God you know.” We pray give us your vision to rethink and see things your way – Breath into our dry bones once again.

**(Mini-Message Part 2, following Second Reading)**

Jesus has ascended into heaven and the disciples remain on earth. Jesus has urged them forward in mission “Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing and teaching.” He has told them he will send the Spirit, he has told them what he knows and shared with them God’s vision... but days pass by.

Then while the disciples are gathered together there is a rush like violent wind, divided tongues as of fire appear on them and they are filled with the Holy Spirit. They begin to do things they were unable to do before.

They respond – amazed and astonished.

Many search for mortal explanations.

But amidst this shock and surprise Peter says “No... **this is** what was spoken through the prophet Joel...I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”

**This is** what God had spoken would happen.

The Holy Spirit comes – just as God has promised. God knows and in this moment God’s vision becomes visible to the mortal eye. And the vision is contagious, the people see visions and dream the dreams of God.

God has urged us forward in mission “Go make disciples, baptize and teach.” God has promised us the gift of the Spirit. But we continue to be amazed and astonished when our eyes catch sight of God’s vision actually alive in the world. We look for mortal explanations instead of like Peter responding ...**this is** what was spoken...I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” Do we believe we can do things we have not done before? Are we willing to have visions and dream dreams of the future God knows? Are we willing to listen to the visions of our young people and the dreams of our older people moved by the Spirit?

Maybe we need to be less amazed and astonished that the Spirit is active and more expectant of visions and dreams through which the Spirit is at work.

“Mortal, can these dry bones live?... I will pour my Spirit upon all flesh... and your young people will see visions and your old people will dream dreams...

**(Mini Message Part 3, following Gospel Reading)**

Jesus said the Advocate will come and when the Spirit of truth comes, the Spirit will guide you into all truth.

This Pentecost we read the story of Ezekiel, feeling our dry bones, wondering if we are truly emerging from this valley of death, longing to be breathed into once again. We want to believe God knows, that God has a vision for the future and these bones can live. We read the book of Acts and long to feel the wind of Pentecost blowing on our skin, to see the tongues of fire in our midst. We pray God make us expectant of your presence in our midst, give us ears to listen to the young and old who bear your visions and speak your dreams.

“Mortal, can these dry bones live?” We lose hope, days pass by, we find mortal explanations...“Oh my goodness child...You need to rethink and see things my way.” We have been sent a Spirit, an Advocate, who breathes life into us and guides us in the way of truth. We live into God’s future responding simply “O Lord God you know.” Amen.