

Welcome to Worship at
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI
Lent 5 - March 29, 2020

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Hymn #177 - "Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest"

**Come, Holy Ghost, Creator blest,
And make our hearts your place of rest;
Come with your grace and heav'nly aid,
And fill the hearts which you have made.**

**To you, the Counselor, we cry,
To you, the gift of God most high;
The fount of life, the fire of love,
The soul's anointing from above.**

**Your light to ev'ry thought impart,
And shed your love in ev'ry heart;
The weakness of our mortal state
With deathless might invigorate.**

**Drive far away our wily foe,
And your abiding peace bestow;
If you are our protecting guide,
No evil can with us abide.**

**Teach us to know the Father, Son,
And you, from both, as Three in One
That we your name may ever bless
And in our lives the truth confess.**

**Praise we the Father and the Son
And Holy Spirit, with them One,
And may the Son on us bestow
The gifts that from the Spirit flow!**

Confession of Sins:

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!

P: Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

First Lesson: Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the LORD was upon me. He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley, which was full of bones. He had me pass through them and go all over among them. There were very many on the valley floor, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Son of man, can these dry bones live?" I answered, "LORD God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.'" This is what the LORD God says to these bones. I am about to make breath enter you so that you will live. I will attach tendons to you. I will put flesh back on you. I will cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you will live. Then you will know that I am the LORD. So I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I was prophesying there was a noise, a rattling, as the bones came together, one bone connecting to another. As I watched, tendons were attached to them, then flesh grew over them, and skin covered them. But there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the wind. Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind that this is what the LORD God says. From the four winds, come, O wind, and breathe into these slain so that they may live." So I prophesied as he commanded me. Breath entered them, and they came back to life. They stood on their feet, a very, very large army. Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They are saying, 'Our bones are dried up. Our hope is lost. We have been completely cut off.' Therefore, prophesy and say to them that this is what the LORD God says. My people, I am going to open your graves and raise you up

from your graves and bring you back to the soil of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live. I will settle you on your own land, and you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.” (EHV)

Psalm 116:

Refrain: I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.

**I love the LORD, for he heard my voice;
He heard my cry for mercy.**

**Because he turned his ear to me,
I will call on him as long as I live.**

**The LORD is gracious and righteous;
When I was in great need, he saved me.**

Refrain: I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.

**For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death,
My eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling.**

**How can I repay the LORD
For all his goodness to me?**

**I will lift up the cup of salvation
And call on the name of the LORD.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
And to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning,
Is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Refrain: I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.

Second Lesson: Romans 8:11-19

And if the Spirit of the one who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit, who is dwelling in you. So then, brothers, we do not owe it to

the sinful flesh to live in harmony with it. For if you live in harmony with the sinful flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. Indeed, those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery so that you are afraid again, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we call out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit himself joins our spirit in testifying that we are God's children. Now if we are children, we are also heirs - heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, since we suffer with him, so that we may also be glorified with him. For I conclude that our sufferings at the present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. In fact, creation is waiting with eager longing for the sons of God to be revealed. (EHV)

Verse of the Day:

The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Gospel: John 11:17-27, 38-45

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away. Many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them concerning their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him, while Mary was sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha replied, "I know that he will rise in the resurrection on the Last Day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never perish. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." Jesus was deeply moved again as he came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. "Take away the stone," he said. Martha, the dead man's sister, told him, "Lord, by this time there will be an odor, because it has been four days." "Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." After he said this, he shouted with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The man who had died came out with his feet and his hands bound with strips of linen and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus told them, "Loose him and let him go." (EHV)

The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn #181 - *“Come, Oh, Come, Life-giving Spirit”*

**Come, oh, come, life-giving Spirit,
God from all eternity!
May your power never fail us;
Dwell within us constantly.
Then shall truth and life and light
Banish all the gloom of night.**

**Show us, Lord, the path of blessing;
When we trespass on our way,
Cast, O Lord, our sins behind you
And be with us day by day.
Should we stray, O Lord, recall;
Work repentance when we fall.**

**With our spirit, Lord, bear witness
That we are the saints of God
Who rely upon him solely
When we're chastened by the rod;
For we know, as children should,
That the cross is for our good.**

**Prompt us, Lord, to come before him
With a childlike heart to pray;**

**Sigh for us, O Holy Spirit,
When we know not what to say.
Then our prayer is not in vain,
And our faith new strength shall gain.**

**Grant our hearts in fullest measure
Wisdom, counsel, purity,
That we always strive to please you,
Working for you willingly.
Let the gospel spread and grow,
Bringing Satan's overthrow.**

**The Sermon: Ezekiel 37:1-14
 "From Death To Life"**

In the Book of Proverbs King Solomon wrote, "*A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*" What are **dry bones**? They are bones which are **weak**, and **brittle**, and easily **broken**. It's interesting that Solomon says a **crushed spirit** results in **dry bones**. A crushed spirit can be the result of many things. In our day it is often caused by **stress**. Undue stress, whether real or merely imagined, is a **powerful** force. It can leave you feeling all dragged out - feeling helpless and useless - searching to find a reason for your existence. Excessive stress has even led some people to the point of **despair**. That's what can happen when your **spirit** has been **crushed** - and at the time of our text, God's **people** were having some severe **spiritual** problems - problems which could easily have led them to **despair**. But today, we will see how God led His people **From Death To Life**, through the power of His **Word**.

Allow me to give you a little background. At the time of our text, God's people (including Ezekiel himself) were in **exile** in the land of **Babylon**. Over 100 years earlier, the Ten Northern Tribes of the Children of Israel had been carried off to **Assyria**, never to return. But now **Babylon** had taken over the military supremacy of the world. It started in 612 BC, when King Nebuchadnezzar had **defeated** the Assyrians in battle. Seven years later, he destroyed the last real **threat** to his world supremacy when he defeated the Pharaoh of **Egypt**. It was at that time, as Nebuchadnezzar was on his way back home, that he deported to Babylon the **brightest** and the **best** of God's people from the land of **Judah**.

A **second** deportation would take place just eight years later - a deportation which would include the Prophet **Ezekiel**. Now, as bad as all this may sound, the

people of Judah still remained **hopeful**. After all, their capital city, **Jerusalem**, was still intact. Since Jerusalem was located on high almost **unapproachable** ground, and since it was surrounded by a series of strong **walls**, the people were confident that it would certainly stand **forever**. They continued to **cling** to that hope until that dreaded day when the **impossible** actually **happened**. Jerusalem had **fallen** - and even the LORD's **temple** itself lay in **ruins**! At that point, the **spirit** of God's people had been utterly **crushed**.

Such was the situation when the LORD came to Ezekiel and showed him the vision of the valley of **dry bones**. God would use this visual story to bring **encouragement** to His despairing people. Ezekiel began with these words, *"The hand of the LORD was upon me. He brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley, which was full of bones. He had me pass through them and go all over among them. There were very many on the valley floor, and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Son of man, can these dry bones live?' I answered, 'LORD God, you know.'"*

God was calling on Ezekiel to use his powers of **observation**, and to study **closely** a **valley** filled with bones. As he did so, two things became **obvious** to Ezekiel. The first problem was that the bones were **scattered** all over, with absolutely **no order** to them. The second problem was that the bones were very **dry** - lifeless and brittle. After noting these problems the LORD asked him, *"Son of man, can these dry bones live?"* What would **you** have answered? Regardless of how much or how little you know about human anatomy, is there any way to make a pile of dried up bones come to **life**? If there **is**, only **God** knows what it is - and that's exactly what **Ezekiel** said.

It was at that time that the LORD proceeded to show Ezekiel **how** it could be done. He said, *"Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' This is what the LORD God says to these bones. I am about to make breath enter you so that you will live. I will attach tendons to you. I will put flesh back on you. I will cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you will live. Then you will know that I am the LORD."* Ezekiel was to **prophecy** - to **preach** to the bones! Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "What **good** was it going to do to preach to a pile of dry old **bones**?" - and perhaps Ezekiel himself was wondering the same thing. From a strictly **human** perspective, preaching to **dry bones** would be about as effective as **watering** a **broomstick** to make it grow. It would achieve the same results as **talking** to a **brick wall**. But from a **Christian** perspective, **God** and His **Word** offer the **only** possible solution. The Bible tells us that, *"With God, all things are possible."*

Now before we look at the **results** of Ezekiel's preaching, I'd like you to think about the fact that God had not required **any** results from him. God had not said, "Ezekiel, **you** try to put these bones together - **you** try to assemble them into a mighty, living **army** for Me." Instead God had said, "You **prophesy** ... and **I** will do the **rest**." Sometimes - perhaps all too often - we put the **cart** before the **horse**. **We** try to comfort the sick, or convert the unbeliever, or regain the straying Christian. **We** try, with our caring, and knowledge, and experience, and ability. But we must remember that if we don't use **God's Word**, there is no **guarantee** that the results we **desire** will actually **occur** - no matter **how** hard we try.

Well, Ezekiel did as he had been commanded by the LORD - and the **results** were **astounding!** He continues, "*As I was prophesying there was a **noise**, a **rattling**, as the bones came together, one bone connecting to another. As I watched, tendons were attached to them, then flesh grew over them, and skin covered them. But there was **no breath** in them*" Ezekiel's account is reminiscent of God's creation of **Adam** back in Genesis, Chapter 2. There God took the **dust** of the ground and shaped it into a human **form**. But there was no **breath** in **that** form either - not until **God** had breathed into him the breath of **life** - then and **only** then, did man become a **living** being. It is through the **breath** of God - the **Spirit** of God - that we truly become **alive**. Ezekiel tells us that those dry bones became a powerful **army** - an army which was fully **equipped** to do the LORD's will.

But what about the **Israelites**? In the previous chapter, God had assured the Israelites that even though they were in exile **now**, their situation was about to **change**. He said, "*But you, O mountains of Israel, will shoot forth your **branches** and bear your **fruit** for my people Israel, because they will **soon come back**.*" Nevertheless, because of all the things I mentioned **earlier** - including the fall of **Jerusalem** and the destruction of God's **temple** - the Israelites were finding it hard to **believe** God's promise. In our text they cried out, "*Our bones are **dried up**. Our hope is **lost**. We have been completely **cut off**.*" So what did God do to pull them **out** of their despair? He sent them **prophets** like **Ezekiel**, to keep **repeating** God's messages until they **finally** sunk in. At the conclusion of our text Ezekiel told the people, "*This is what the **LORD God** says. My people, I am going to **open** your graves and **raise** you up from your graves and bring you **back** to the soil of Israel. Then you will know that I am the **LORD**, when I **open** your graves and **raise** you up from your graves, O my people. I will put **my Spirit** in you, and you will **live**. I will **settle** you on your own land, and you will know that I, the **LORD**, have spoken, and I have **done** it, declares the LORD.*"

The LORD **did** exactly what He **promised** to do for the Israelites. It was roughly 35 years later, under the rule of Cyrus the Persian, that God enabled the Israelites to **return** to their homeland - the **Promised Land**. They **returned** in order to **serve** the LORD - by rebuilding the **walls** of Jerusalem, and more importantly, by rebuilding the LORD's **temple** and reestablishing **worship** in the land.

The only thing which is remaining for us to look at this morning is how the vision of the valley of **dry bones** applies to **us**. Perhaps the Apostle Paul had this vision in mind when he wrote these words to the **Ephesians**, "*You were **dead** in your trespasses and sins.*" Those bones in Ezekiel's vision were **dead** - dried out - completely without **life**. They were incapable of doing **anything** for the LORD. The Israelites, whom the bones **represented**, were in **captivity**, far removed from their homeland. Jerusalem had been **destroyed**, and even God's **temple** lay in ruins. Their **spirit** had been utterly **crushed**. And **sin** has left **us** in the same condition. We were just a bunch of hopeless, helpless, **dry bones**.

But God took those dry bones in the **vision**, and He brought them back to **life**, fashioning them into a vast **army**. God also took those despondent **Israelites**, and sent them prophets like **Ezekiel**, to revive their **hope**, and to prepare them for their **return** to the Promised Land. God has also taken **us** in our sinful condition, and has given us **new life** through His Word and Sacraments. Again Paul told the Ephesians, "*He made us **alive** with Christ ... So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household. You have been built on the foundation of the **apostles** and **prophets**, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief Cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him **you too** are being built together into a dwelling place for **God** by the Spirit.*" Dear friends, the Holy Spirit **lives** in **us**. He has already taken us **From Death To Life** through the power of God's Word. May He **continue** to revive our **dry bones** - keeping our **faith** from becoming weak and brittle - and fully equipping us to live our lives for the **LORD**. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Prayers:

Dear Lord Jesus, may the message of the **cross** and all that You accomplished by it for our salvation, never fail to **inspire** us. Keep the pleasures,

treasures, and cares of **this** life from **replacing** the cross in our hearts. Remind us daily to lay down our burdens of **sin** at the cross, and there find **consolation** in the pardon You won for us. Govern our **lives** by the cross, that seeing the **suffering** You endured for our sins, we will learn more and more to **hate** sin and to **love** righteousness. Through that message of **mercy** and **forgiveness**, strengthen, cheer, and guide us all our days. Keep the cross **uppermost** in our minds and hearts whenever we pray to our heavenly Father, so that our prayers find **acceptance** with Him.

Dear Savior, may we continue to **stand** before Your cross, filled with **wonder** at the **love** You showed for us there. And in our **dying** hour, **keep** us near Your cross, where we can **always** find forgiveness, life, and salvation. Give us a **blessed** death that we may enter into Your **eternal** presence, and there receive unending **joy** and **glory**. Don't allow us to be **offended** at the cross, but rather, may we boldly **confess** it as the means by which sinners **triumph** over sin and hell. And when crosses enter our **own** lives, give us **grace** through the Holy Spirit to **bear** them, thankful for the **privilege** of suffering for Your name. And finally, **exchange** our crosses for a **crown**, bringing us into **eternal life** in heaven. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.
Amen.**

Hymn # 186 - "O Spirit of Life, O Spirit of God"

**O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God,
Revealer of God's holy Word,
You come to us from God's great throne,
From God the Father and the Son,
O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God.**

**O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God,
Enlighten us by that same Word;
Unless your grace the pow'r should give,
None can believe in Christ and live,
O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God.**

**O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God,
Increase our faith in our dear Lord;
Teach us to know the Father's love
And his dear Son, who reigns above,
O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God.**

**O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God,
Lead us to love your sacred Word;
The holy flame of love impart,
That kindness may inspire each heart,
O Spirit of life, O Spirit of God.**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Blessing:

P: The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

C: **Amen.**

Hymn #446 - "I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus"

**I am trusting you, Lord Jesus,
Trusting only you,
Trusting you for full salvation,
Free and true.**

**I am trusting you for pardon;
At your feet I bow,
For your grace and tender mercy**

Trusting now.

**I am trusting you for cleansing
In the crimson flood,
Trusting you who made me holy
By your blood.**

**I am trusting you to guide me;
You alone shall lead,
Ev'ry day and hour supplying
All my need.**

**I am trusting you for power;
You can never fail.
Words which you yourself shall give me
Must prevail.**

**I am trusting you, Lord Jesus;
Never let me fall.
I am trusting you forever
And for all.**