

Sermon for The Day of Pentecost

Date: May 23, 2021

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Ezekiel 37:1–14

Epistle Reading: Acts 2:1–21

Gospel Reading: John 15:26–27; 16:4b–15

Sermon Text: Ezekiel 37:1–14

Sermon Title: The Lord and Giver of Life

Introit: Psalm 104:24, 27–28, 30; Antiphon: Liturgical Text

Hymns:

LSB 497 – Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord

LSB 503 – O Day Full of Grace

LSB 953 – We All Believe in One True God

LSB 392 – God Loves Me Dearly

LSB 496 – Holy Spirit, Light Divine

Songs:

Change My Heart Oh God

Another in the Fire

By Our Love

Holy is the Lord

Sanctuary

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 203

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



Text: Ezekiel 37:1–14

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon 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 was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, 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, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.’ Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

NOTE: Copyright information.

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2021 Pastor James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the Nicene Creed we say:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.

Did you ever think about that statement, and what we are saying by it?

So many people in our world today are searching for life. They want a full life, so they fill their lives with all kinds of things, activities, and busyness. They want a meaningful life, and so strive for importance and significance to make themselves feel useful and needed. They want a long life, so they look to medicine, technology, exercise and special diets to prolong their days.

In these and many other ways, despite all of our best efforts, life continues to frustrate and elude most people. Young healthy people die. We find out that the world can and will go on without us just fine. People are working so hard at living that they sometimes work and live themselves to death, or work so hard and so long they have no life to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

In the Nicene Creed, we confess where the source of our life is. We confess there is only one true source of life. We confess there is only one “Lord and giver of life.” The Spirit of God which brooded over the waters protecting and caring for the new creation to create and give life is the One still giving life today. What the Holy Spirit makes alive is truly alive. Apart from Him there is no life. The life that He gives is full, meaningful and eternal.

The problem is, just as the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, the life that He gives also often cannot be seen. In fact, it is often hidden. It is hidden under what appears to be the very opposite of life and full living. Hidden under struggle; hidden under pain; hidden even under death. If you’re like me you tend to believe what you see. So we have a paradox here. We have a conflict of truths. What the world thinks is living God calls dead, and what the world thinks is dead God calls life.

We confess in the Nicene Creed, life, true life, is a matter of faith. Something that we must believe, in spite of what our eyes tell us.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.

What does the Bible tell us about life? We heard today about God’s Spirit of life, and His giving of life, from the prophet Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones. Dry bones are dead bones. Dead as dead can be. And not only dead, but dead a long time.

Scripture records:

God asks, “Son of Man, can these bones live?”

Ezekiel's eyes may tell him no, but to God he cannot say no, so he says, "O God, you know."

God does know, so He tells Ezekiel to prophesy, to speak the Word of God, to those bones. At God's Word, they come together, they re-form, they are born again. But there is no life. Not yet.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.

God sends His breath to these bones. Breath – the same breath He breathed into Adam after forming him from the dust of the ground. "The Lord and giver of life" gives life to these dry bones. What the world calls dead, God calls, and makes, alive.

Peter in his Pentecost sermon gives a message about Jesus, who was crucified, dead and buried. Dead as dead can be. Three days in the tomb. On Sunday the women went to anoint a dead body as was their custom. The disciples were making plans to cope with this and move on. "Can these bones live?"

Peter points to the Psalms of David for the answer. There God's Word says indeed, not only can they, but they will! On that first Easter Sunday, they did! "This [crucified, dead, and buried] Jesus God raised up," Peter proclaims, "and of that we are all witnesses."

Peter later explains further:

Christ also suffered once for sins, the Righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,¹

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life.

What the world calls dead God calls, and makes, alive.

Jesus speaking to a crowd at the Feast of Tabernacles promises "living water." Now there are some things that get lost in the translation, you have to understand a little about that Feast to understand what Jesus is teaching here. Part of the Feast of Tabernacles was a ceremony of getting water. As the people get the water they were to remember a number of things: The goodness of God in sending rain; The goodness of God in providing water for His people in the Exodus. (even water from a rock.) The promise of God to send His Holy Spirit to them, calling the Spirit "the water from the well of salvation."²

In this context Jesus stands and proclaims, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." There was no other way to understand what Jesus was saying to those standing there that day hearing His voice. He is the source of the water; He is the

1 1 Peter 3:18

2 Isaiah 12:3

source of the Holy Spirit; He is the source of life; He is God. And out of His side “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”³

When Jesus is crucified these words come true. When Jesus bows His head in death, a soldier’s spear pierces His side, and out of His heart flowed water and blood.⁴ This is how Christ gives His Spirit, the living water, to His Church. This is how we receive the benefits of Jesus’ death and resurrection, that being His forgiveness and new life. It is through His water and blood that flow from His cross, and which lead us back to His cross, back to the water of Holy Baptism, back to the blood in His Supper. The One the world called dead, has become the source of life for all who believe.

So now, in the Church, when we ask “Can these bones live?” we know they can. Here is the Spirit, the living water, “the Lord and giver of life,” given to all “who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They will be satisfied.”⁵

Newborn babies, who look alive and innocent, but who in God’s eyes are born dead in sin, are raised from death to new life by the Spirit, “the Lord and giver of life,” in Holy Baptism.

Sinners, who may look alive and successful, but who in God’s eyes are dead in sin, are raised from the dead and given new life by the Spirit, “the Lord and giver of life,” through God’s Word of Holy Absolution, or forgiveness.

We who may look good on the outside, but who are dried up by the world, by persecution, by struggles, by difficulties, by pain, by doubts, fears and worries, we are given faith and strength and new life by the Spirit, “the Lord and giver of life,” in Holy Communion, as we eat the Body and drink the Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ, receiving all that He is, and all that He has, for us.

This is the life that you received when you were Baptized, and continue to receive when you hear the Word of God, when your sins are forgiven, when the Body and Blood of Jesus are placed into your mouth. You receive the Spirit of life through these Means of Grace, and you live.

The life that you need, the life that you seek, the life that you are thirsting for, is here given for you. A full life, filled not with the things of this world, but filled with Christ and His life. A meaningful life, not just the temporary significance of position or importance in this world, but the status and position of a Child of the Most High. You are given a long life, not a guarantee to reach a ripe old age, but a God proclaimed promise of eternity in Heaven.

3 John 7:38

4 John 19:34

5 Matthew 5:6

That is the life that has been given to you. That is what we celebrate today, on this day of Pentecost. On the very birthday of the Holy Christian Church and the birthday of the New Testament. We celebrate not just the sending and giving of the Holy Spirit as an historical event. We celebrate the Holy Spirit: whom Christ has poured out on His Church; is still in His Church; still active, still giving life, still saving, still forgiving, still raising dry bones, still quenching the thirst of all who are thirsting for life. Today, we celebrate that “the Lord and giver of life” has come to us and given us life!

Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people**

