

FIRST LESSON: Ezekiel 37:1-14

SECOND LESSON: Acts 2:1-21

May 19, 2024

PENTECOST COMMUNION

“The Spirit of the Lord”

Meditation and silence, © Lisa C. Farrell

Before the wonder, before the excitement of that day at Pentecost there was . . . waiting. Jesus had ascended into heaven, and the disciples were told to return to Jerusalem and wait for the empowering of the Holy Spirit. But they had absolutely no idea what that meant. They didn't know that they would experience God in a more powerful way than they had ever done in their lives. They didn't know that they would open their mouths and words from languages they did not speak would come out. They waited upon God and prayed, and when God moved it was in a form they could not have imagined.

It had not been an easy journey for the disciples. When Jesus was alive they followed him with one set of expectations. No matter what he said about suffering and death they still could not take it in. It made no sense. He must have been speaking metaphorically. And then he was arrested, beaten and crucified. He died, and along with him their hopes and purpose for living died. They were broken. And just as bitter disillusionment had begun to set in, they were surprised once more by a resurrected Jesus, a Jesus who was not with them all the time, a Jesus who came and went at will and taught them about this new reality they had entered. And then he left. He ascended into heaven to be with his Father.

The prophet Elijah also knew times of great uncertainty. Discouragement and hopelessness pervaded his world. So God gave him an incredible vision. The Spirit of the Lord set him in the middle of a valley full of bones. They were dry and abandoned, the worst kind of death. Clearly, they had been soldiers, but the battle had been so devastating that there was no one was left alive to give them a decent burial. Instead, they lay where they had fallen. And yet, bit by bit, stage by stage, those dead bones were brought to life.

The Spirit of the Lord has no limits. God's vision is vaster and God's power is greater than anything we can begin to imagine. We get stuck in our small worlds and immediate crisis. But God has a plan. God always has a plan. And God's plan is about life, even bringing new life out of dry bones.

Normally on Pentecost I would be giving you a long sermon about all of these things. But that is not what we are going to do this morning. This morning, we are going to wait upon the Lord. We are going to sit in God's presence and simply ask God to send God's Spirit. Our time of silent

meditation will last 10 minutes. Ten minutes is hardly any time at all—unless you're an American.

We don't like silence. Silence makes us uncomfortable. It is hard for us to settle into silence. We squirm and fidget and our minds wander. So here is my advice. As we center ourselves in silence to focus on God and invite God's Spirit into our lives and our church, do not waste energy being angry with yourself when your mind wanders. When you notice that you are thinking about all sorts of irrelevant things, just gently reach out like you would to take a child by the hand and bring your thoughts back. No struggle. No condemnation, just grace and peace. And should you have to do this repeatedly during our time of silent prayer, be patient with yourself. We're not used to quiet in our society. Our minds will try to fill the space. But in truth we are not trying to empty our minds, but to fill them with the Spirit of God. Frank will play quietly, and when our time of shared silent prayer is over, we will sing together, and then we will share communion. Allow the Spirit to touch you, speak to you and meet you where you are. Let us be still and know that the Lord is God. Amen

Ezekiel 37:1-14

37 The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. **2** He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. **3** He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

4 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!' **5** This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. **6** I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord."

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. **8** I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

9 Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" **10** So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

11 Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'**12** Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. **13** Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. **14** I will put my

Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.”

Acts 2:1-21

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. **3** They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. **4** All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. **6** When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?”⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, **10** Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome **11** (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” **12** Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, “They have had too much wine.”

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. **15** These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! **16** No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20 The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved.’