

**“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.’”**

What would you do if you saw a valley full of skeletons? The Old Testament text read to us on Pentecost is quite odd. What do dry bones have to do with the Holy Spirit? The key words in this text are prophesy and spirit. **THE HOLY SPIRIT WORKS THROUGH PREACHING TO BRING RESTORATION.**

First, I. The Spirit comes through preaching. Ezekiel has a problem in today’s text, and that’s a big pile of bones. **“there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.”** Some of these bones belonged to moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas, and sons and daughters. These were real people with real stories, real triumphs, and real sorrows. It would seem as though all of that was brought to nothing, death is the great equalizer.

Now, this text has some wordplay that’s lost on us who speak English. The word Spirit, Ruach, in Hebrew occurs ten times in these fourteen verses. However, it’s only translated as Spirit twice. The other times it is either translated as breath or wind. For the sake of teaching, as I read this text to you, every time I come across the Hebrew word Ruach, I will read it as Spirit.

The Lord’s solution for Ezekiel is for him to preach to these bones. We read verses 4–7: **“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 [Spirit] 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 [Spirit] 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.”** It is through prophecy, that is, the preaching of God’s Word, that the dry bones are put back together, with sinews and flesh.

And so you are gathered together here in this place: on a confirmation Sunday, on Pentecost, waiting for the Spirit of God to touch your life. The dry bones are all around us. Those made dry and brittle by the sorrows of this life, the sins that warp us, and the years wearing on us. **“Then [God] 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 indeed cut off.’”** We are the dry bones.

The Lord’s advice to Ezekiel is the same as to us today. **“‘Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.’”** We

believe teach and confess “To obtain such faith God instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when he wills, in those who hear the gospel.” [AC V 1–2].

Keep on showing up to Church to hear God’s Word. Bring your kids, even if they don’t seem to be listening. If you don’t get the sermon, listen to it again on Youtube, check out our website and download the sermon manuscript. Call the pastor, ask what he meant if you don’t understand a certain segment of it. Why? Because the Spirit comes through preaching.

We see this same thing in the reading from the book of Acts. Once the Spirit comes, almost immediately Peter gets up and addresses the crowd. He preaches. He preaches to the dry bones of those who have not yet come to faith in Jesus.

And so today we celebrate because we have a confirmand in whom the Holy Spirit has worked year after year through preaching, through confirmation classes, through VBS and home devotions. The journey that started through baptism continues on this day as the Holy Spirit continues to come to this young man through the preaching of the Word, and today through Christ’s body and blood under bread and wine in communion.

But why care about the Spirit? Look at the amazing things happening in our Old Testament text. II. The Spirit brings restoration. The message of Christianity is that God sent His Son Jesus to this Earth to live a perfect life and redeem us. The world is broken, lost in sin and hopelessness. We die, we become frail and brittle like these dry bones, but Christ has died for our sins, and He rose again on the third day.

Jesus Christ came to redeem the world, and his death and resurrection is a sneak peek as to what will happen to us. Jesus came to redeem the world, and we see what redeemed creation looks like in the perfect, sinless, resurrected Son of Man.

But we care about the Holy Spirit because if Jesus Christ is the blueprint for restored creation, the Holy Spirit is the builder. The Holy Spirit is the one who delivers that life, that perfection, and that restoration. We see this play out in our Old Testament text, continuing at verse 8: **“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 [Spirit] in them. Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the [Spirit]; prophesy, son of man, and say to the [Spirit], Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four [Spirit], O [Spirit], and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the [Spirit] came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.”**

Likewise, the Lord promises in verses 12 through 14: **“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.””**

We are now living in the fulfillment of this promise. The Lord God has placed His Spirit in us, and we are living. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in the hearts of believers, so that we may be restored from dry bones to living, breathing creatures. That is, those who have been restored and made alive in Christ.

Maybe we have friends who are on the fence about joining a church, or maybe they're part of a church but they're only nominally involved: only participating every once in a while. I think the devil tempts us to believe that being involved with the Church: participating in fellowship, worshipping at church or in our homes through family devotions, and attending Bible studies—the devil tempts us to believe that these things will turn us from living creatures into dry bones. What's more boring than your local Church?

Perhaps that's the temptation of young people. Maybe even adults! A Saturday night party, a weekend camping trip, Sunday morning brunch, Netflix, all of these are more entertaining and fulfilling than what goes on here on Sunday and throughout the week.

But the Spirit is in the restoration business. Ezekiel must preach twice to the bones for them to become living again, and so for us, it takes lifelong applications of the preached Word and Sacraments to have the Spirit work in us to restore us and put that meat back on our bones so to speak. The end result will be eventually that the Spirit will raise us from our tombs; we will be dry bones no longer.

And so we find that as the Spirit keeps on presenting this preached message of Jesus dying and rising for us, that we are restored little by little every day. We find that our lives are restored bit by bit. Those relationships we thought we might lose are deepened as we grow closer to family not only as biological family, but as brothers and sisters in Christ. The hours we spend in prayer and study of God's Word are given back to us as the Spirit is able to multiply our time and help redirect our priorities to the most needful things. The Spirit uses the preached Word to come to us, and breathe into us new life. The final product being a life that has meaning, and a life that's worth living.

**“O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.”** Whether you were confirmed today or confirmed a half century ago, follow this piece of advice. Celebrate the Holy Spirit, the great restorer, who restored those dry bones, who enlivened the disciples at Pentecost, and is here present even now, making all things new. Amen!