

Hope of Life

March 29, 2020

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Ezekiel 37:1-14

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

A life of hope is what we all need right now. Many of us are at home, trying to get used to a new normal, away from the life we once knew. No longer going to school or the office, unable to go out and sit down to eat at our favorite restaurant, no longer gathering in groups larger than 10 people and trying to stay at least 6 feet apart, we feel alone and isolated. We want the life that we once knew, even though we are trying to get used to this new normal. We are using technology more than ever before to connect and overcome this isolation, but it dries out our eyes staring at our screens for so long. Still, we wait for the virus to pass, wondering if we will survive, if there is any hope, as life around us seems to be drying us and withering away.

Our Old Testament reading was written at a time when there was little to no hope of Promise and the prophet Ezekiel was living in Babylonia. It shares with us a vision Ezekiel received from God. Much of Israel had been scattered, no longer living in the Promised land. They had been destroyed and most had been taken away into exile. But the Spirit of the Lord takes Ezekiel back to a valley of bones. Lifeless dry bones that are scattered all over.

At one time, those bones were connected to one another and had life. Connected by tendons, sinews, and flesh that surrounded them. They made up bodies each with a head, arms, legs, feet, and a chest. And like us, each chest had a set of lungs that would take in and exhale about 25,000 breaths each day. But then again, something had happened making it difficult for them to take in even one breath.

While some of us deal with health issues that make it difficult to breathe because of asthma, COPD, and sarcoidosis. As people of God, we have not been breathing very well for a long time. We have been infected and breathed in things that have harmed us physically like secondhand smoke, eating too many “bad” foods, and have sat for way too long. We have also been infected and breathed in things that harm us spiritually like greed, prioritizing our own personal prosperity over and above our care for others, even our relationship with God. It has put us in a precarious position as we face the coronavirus, which threatens to take away our very lives.

A life of hope is what we all need right now. He is the giver of life and His Word gives us Hope. In our text, God asks Ezekiel, ***“Son of man, can these bones live?”*** Ezekiel replies, ***“O Sovereign Lord, you alone know.”*** Then God says to Ezekiel, ***“Prophecy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’”*** (v.4-6) Ezekiel did as he was told, and there was a rattling sound and the bones came together, tendons and flesh appeared and skin covered them, but there was still no breath in them. It was then that God said to prophesy to the breath and after the breath entered them, they came to life and stood once again.

During this time of waiting, maybe God has given us all a breather from all that has been consuming our lives. We have time to focus on His Word made flesh in the person of Jesus. After all, in our Gospel reading, it was Jesus who said to Lazarus to come out of the grave, and Lazarus received new life. The Word of God is powerful. It is living and active. And especially, in light of our current situation, the Word of God gives us the hope and Good News that we need, because it assures us that through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we have new life in Him. His Spirit comes into our lives through the waters of Holy Baptism, and our lives come alive once again. We are no longer dead in our trespasses. He dusts us off, stands us on our feet, and gives

to us a new, eternal life in Him. And this is the hope that we share with all believers.

A human being can live about 40 days without food, roughly 3 days without water, and nearly 8 minutes without air, but not one minute without the sense the future will somehow be better than today. In a valley full of dry bones it does not make any sense to have hope. And yet, because of the Word of God that continues to breathe life in us, we wait expectantly for the intangible to become reality. We have a living God of all Hope who brings to life that which was once dead. And He will not disappoint us.

A life of hope is what we all need right now. There are many people around us who place their hope in things that will eventually disappoint. While we might not be able to gather in groups of more than 10 people and we need to stay 6 feet apart, many people around us need to hear the Good News so that the breath of life might come to them and they too might receive life once again. Through His Word we receive Hope, we remain connected to Him and with others, as we wait expectantly for Him.

In Jesus' name. Amen

Sermon Title: Hope of Life

1. Ezekiel:
 - a. was a prophet in Babylon.
 - b. wrote at a time when there was little to no hope.
 - c. wrote about a vision given to him by God.
 - d. a and b.
 - e. all of the above.

2. We have already been "infected and breathed in"
 - a. things that harm us physically.
 - b. things that harm us spiritually.
 - c. the coronavirus.
 - d. a and b.
 - e. all of the above.

3. During this time of waiting
 - a. God has given us a breather.
 - b. we can receive Hope through His Word.
 - c. we can share His word with others.
 - d. we can pray to God.
 - e. a and b.
 - f. all of the above.

4. In a valley full of dry bones:
 - a. God gives Ezekiel hope.
 - b. God gives hope to Israel that is scattered.
 - c. God gives hope to us.
 - d. a and b.
 - e. all of the above.

5. In light of the Word of God, I plan to...