

EZEKIEL 37:1-14
CAN THESE LIVE?

“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."” (1-3).

Ezekiel was physically taken by the hand of the Lord and placed into this valley of death. We don't like to be shown death. We don't like to talk about death. Today we celebrated a baptism, and so let's think about that instead.

All mankind is born sinful. By nature, every person is born spiritually blind, dead, and an enemy of God. Harsh words to hear, but true, and what we're looking at today.

Ephesians 2:(1-5) tells you that “you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ — by grace you have been saved.”

Can these bones live? Can this child dead in sin live? O Lord You know! Ezekiel turns all attention to God, as should we when we consider our baptisms, Lucan's baptism, or any baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is no work of man, no commitment that you're making to God. This is entirely the work of God, choosing Lucan and all baptized as children of God and giving them life.

We don't understand it. That's why we call it a Sacrament. Sacrament means mystery. Can this sin that we're born dead in be forgiven? The Lord knows. The Lord tells us.

In Colossians 2:(11-13) the Lord tells us that in Jesus we “were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him **in baptism**, in which you were also **raised with Him** through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **God made alive** together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses.”

Turn your attention to the Lord and hear Him assure you that He gives life to your dead bones. He says that He has forgiven you of all of your sins through Jesus Christ. Trust Him. He's the one who's in charge. When you sin, and when you wrestle with long time sins, give that sin to Jesus. God will revive you and give you hope again, even when we don't know how the bad stuff in our lives could be good again. Can these bones live? Can this child live? The Lord alone knows and we trust the Lord God will do something good.

How is that you ask? "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into His death**? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be **united with Him in a resurrection like His**" – Romans 6:(3-5).

Baptism is a gravesite and a fountain of new life. Don't think of this as something too terrible or offensive for you to consider for your child. Christ our Lord joined these dead bones to Himself. His body was buried in a grave. Yes, He became one of the dead for all of us, by being crucified for our sins. However, He didn't stay dead. God the Father raised Him from the dead. God delivered Jesus, and what I read from Romans tells us that God will deliver us as well because our baptisms join us to Jesus' death and units us with His resurrection.

By joining you to Jesus God has placed Jesus in the midst of your sinful dead lives. Jesus is asked if us sinful people can live? He answers, 'O Lord God You know. You know that I died under those sins and forgave those sins, and because You raised Me from the dead You will raise them as well. You will bring them life and salvation.'

You can look upon our Old Testament reading or any cemetery as a place of despair, a hopeless place. However, between God and the grave there's no contest. Our God is the God over all life and death. He has authority over death, and as He tells sin and death to flee at your baptisms, He will tell death and sin to flee at your graves. God is going to open your graves and raise you from your graves. Death isn't permanent. It's a weigh station – in God's balance scales, and with you being covered in Christ you're not found wanting.

When we think of Baptism and all that's placed on our side of the scale, placing us within God's favour the amazement is beyond belief. I said you're covered in Christ. Galatians 3:(26-27) says that "in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ **have put on Christ.**" You wear Jesus like a royal robe, and that's why many who are baptized are clothed in white on their baptismal day to show the righteousness of Jesus that now clothes them.

But it's not just Jesus who is now on your side of the weigh scales, the Holy Spirit also joins Him. As God told the dead bones in our reading from Ezekiel that He would put His Spirit within them and they would live, Acts 2(:38-39) tells us that when we're baptized in the name of Jesus Christ we receive the forgiveness of our sins and "**the gift of the Holy Spirit**. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself."

Don't mock what happened today and say it's not for children or they don't need it. King David said that he "was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him" (Psalm 51:5). Baptism washes away sin (Acts 22:16). This is no work of man, but rather the work of God bringing life to one who is dead in their sins. Don't bicker questioning how a little baby can be sinful, but rather rejoice trusting in the promises of God.

If Christ is in you, as the passages we've looked at about Baptism tell us that Jesus is placed in us and on us, "although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies **through His Spirit who dwells in you**" – Romans 8(:10-11), as we heard earlier.

When asked if these bones can live, if this child born dead in sin can live, if you can live eternally answer with the words of Peter who said, "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, in which He went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. **Baptism**, which corresponds to this, **now saves you**, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**" – 1 Peter 3(:18-21).

Answer with the words of Paul, God "saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life" – Titus 3(:5-7).

These promises of the resurrection and life change the way we Christians look at life and the grave. The grave is not a daunting permanent enemy. It's a fragile whimpering evil foe who has already been defeated.

Can these bones live? Can this child live? Can you live? Yes, Lord, You have promised us life. It's a mystery to us. We pretty it up calling it a sacrament, but still we entrust our lives to You. Amen.