

May 23, 2021 the Day of Pentecost  
Who Has Seen the Wind?

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**

<sup>1</sup>The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." <sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. <sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup>I will lay sinews on 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."

<sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." <sup>10</sup>I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

<sup>11</sup>Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup>I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."

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Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God**

And the minstrel's sang, "Dem bones gonna rise again" Many of us grew up with casual racism and took a while to recognize the harm in it. One unlooked for source of harm was the taming of this Bible story. It went along with all the Sunday school images of God the benevolent permissive grandpa. When you visualize this story it helps to keep Stephen King in mind, He once wrote, *Night Shift* "The thing under my bed waiting to grab my ankle isn't real. I know that, and I also know that if I'm careful to keep my foot under the covers, it will never be able to grab my ankle." Imagining that field of scattered bones is scary enough but to hear the bones rattle and see them move back together of their own accord could induce a dive under the table.

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People didn't used to decorate for Halloween. Now it rivals Christmas in the home goods stores. I think that is happening because we Christians have ceded an important element of our faith. God is scarier than a witch's cat. We strive to make folks comfortable and inadvertently leave them unchallenged. It's hard to communicate the fear of the Lord, but that is central to things like the Proverbs; Proverbs 1: 7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 9: 10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

Pentecost represents the uncanny intervention of God's Spirit in the everyday lives of human beings. For a long time my motto has been, "If weird stuff didn't happen I'd be out of work." We all have stories that may just come down to misperception. Yet, our misperceptions indicate that reality has a certain oddness. Maybe we should call it God-ness. When things fall a certain way we get motivated to make changes. God putting dead parts back together and breathing life into them should evoke a mad doctor crying, "it's alive!" God doing a Frankenstein impersonation is the essence of this story. It teaches us to be amazed at processes like redemption and recovery that prove death is no obstacle to the author of life.

"Fear and guilt are sisters;" wrote Shirley Jackson in the **Haunting of Hill House**. Yet there is a fear that is disconnected from guilt. We trust God's power to love and forgive us, but that should not imply God is tamed. The Holy Spirit can come as a sweet cooling breeze or when necessary as a category 5 hurricane. It all depends what needs to be accomplished. The Eastern Orthodox Church cherishes minimal lighting and gilt icons to direct the worshipper to the mystery of God. The Western Church went with

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light so bright it dazzles and three dimensional representations of horrific events in our history. We Protestants think such things are distractions from the true awesome mystery of God. Without the trappings we are in danger of overlooking that God who has befriended us is also the creator and sustainer of the universe. It would only take a word from God and we would be no more, but God's word comes with power to sustain and give us life.

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**Closing Prayer:** In fulfillment of Christ's promise, you poured out the Holy Spirit upon the chosen disciples and filled the church with power. We thank you for sending your Spirit to us today to kindle faith and lead us into all truth, working in the church to make us faithful disciples, and empowering us to proclaim the living Christ to every nation