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Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

WALKING AMONG THE BONES

By Elisabeth Beall

An Excerpt from Today's First Reading

*The hand of the LORD came upon me,
and led me out in the Spirit of the LORD
and set me in the center of the plain,
which was now filled with bones.*

*He made me walk among the bones in every direction
so that I saw how many they were on the surface of the plain.*

How dry they were!

He asked me:

Son of man, can these bones come to life?

I answered, "Lord GOD, you alone know that."

Then he said to me:

Prophesy over these bones, and say to them:

Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!

Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones:

See! I will bring spirit into you, that you may come to life.

I will put sinews upon you, make flesh grow over you,

*cover you with skin, and put spirit in you
so that you may come to life and know that I am the LORD.
I prophesied as I had been told,
and even as I was prophesying I heard a noise;
it was a rattling as the bones came together, bone joining bone.
I saw the sinews and the flesh come upon them,
and the skin cover them, but there was no spirit in them.
Then the LORD said to me:
Prophesy to the spirit, prophesy, son of man,
and say to the spirit: Thus says the Lord GOD:
From the four winds come, O spirit,
and breathe into these slain that they may come to life.
I prophesied as he told me, and the spirit came into them;
they came alive and stood upright, a vast army.*

EZEKIEL 37:1-10

Reflection

Usually readings from any of the books of the prophets are a little tough for me to chew on – they take such a lofty perspective of the world and salvation, as opposed to the more localized, even everyday perspective of, say, 1 Corinthians (“For we are God’s co-workers; you are God’s field, God’s building” [1 Corinthians 3:9]).

What a surprise to turn to today’s First Reading and discover that these verses from Ezekiel spoke to me so clearly!

To be fair, there is also a lofty perspective of this reading (Is it about the restoration of Israel? Is it about the coming of the Messiah? Is it about resurrection?). But I’m neither a biblical scholar nor a theologian. What I saw in these words was God’s question to Ezekiel – an impossible-to-answer question; and then God’s command to Ezekiel, which he obeyed, though perhaps not without some doubt. Certainly all things are possible with God, but I imagined how I would react if God would call on me to prophesy and bring back to life dusty, dry bones.

And it doesn’t stop there. After the bones knit themselves back together and are covered once again in flesh, God commands Ezekiel to prophesy so that these bodies will be filled with spirit – that they will come fully back to life. It’s a remarkable picture of a desert plain filled with death, gradually being restored to life. And what a reminder that this miracle is possible for each of us, whenever we choose to avail ourselves of that possibility.

Who among us has not gone through a time of dryness, our own desert wasteland – whether we are mourning, or longing, or wandering without direction? Who among us has not puzzled over the best way around or through this wasteland – and wondered what might lie on the other side, if we are fortunate enough ever to get there?

Ezekiel makes it clear that the word of God breathes renewed life into each of us. As we are not bones on a plain, but human beings living in a complicated and challenging world, we need not wait for God to present us with a prophet to say those words over us and watch the spirit fill us. Instead, we can turn to scripture and take God's own words into our mouths, our ears, our hearts. We can welcome God breathing life back into us, raising us upright, and guiding us though the desert to the other side.

“Then you shall know that I am the LORD,
when I open your graves and have you rise from them,
O my people!
I will put my spirit in you that you may live” (Ezekiel 37:13-14).





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For Pondering

- When was a time you were trudging (metaphorically) through a desert plain in your life? How did God breathe life into your situation, and guide you to the other side?
- How does God's word keep you refreshed and alive?
- What spiritual practices help you through periods of dryness and struggle?

For Prayer

Instruments of God

*A small, wooden flute, an empty hollow reed, rests in her silent hand.
It awaits the breath of One Who creates the song through its open form.*

*My often-empty life rests in the hand of God;
like the hollowed flute, it yearns for the melody which only Breath can give.
The small, wooden flute and I, we need the One Who breathes,
we await the One Who makes melody.
And the One Whose touch creates, awaits our empty, ordinary forms,
so that the song-starved world may be fed with golden melodies.*

JOYCE RUPP

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