

## Resurrection

- [Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)
- [John 11:1-45](#)

The first reading this morning is one which will be familiar to those of you who come to the Easter Vigil, because it is an important story that we often read as part of our Salvation History. It is one of the visions of the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel was a contemporary of Jeremiah's – both of them experienced the final fall of Jerusalem and the exile, but whereas Jeremiah was able to get away to Egypt, Ezekiel was taken to Babylon with many of the leaders of Judah.

Ezekiel was given to visions, or perhaps visions were given to Ezekiel.

I was reminded of one of his visions last week when the shelter-in-place order came down. The last thing I did before 5pm on that Thursday was to come here and make sure that all the heating was off, all the perishable food was out of the kitchen and everything was safely locked up. Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord surrounded by cherubim leaving the temple of Jerusalem, but first he visited the different parts of the temple as though saying good-bye. It is a sad vision. And I felt sad as I closed up the church that day.

I suspect that we are all suffering from grief. It may not be the emotion that you are most aware of, but it is probably there. We grieve for the life we had but have no longer – for friends we cannot see or hug; for the freedom to go where we choose, when we choose; for the sense of financial security; for being able to gather with friends for celebrations and for comfort and support; for being able to worship together in the same holy space. We grieve for the loss of a certain future. These are sad and difficult times.

The fall of Jerusalem and the exile into Babylon or other countries was a time of great grief and sadness for our spiritual ancestors. We have the advantage of 20/20 hindsight – we know that a small group did return to Jerusalem and did rebuild the temple – but at the time of Ezekiel's vision that was way off on the future and though they might hope, they could not imagine it as a serious probability.

And so Ezekiel saw a valley of dry bones.

And God told him to prophesy to the bones. Not a very likely thing to do, but Ezekiel goes ahead, and to his amazement the bones respond to the word of God spoken and get up, reassemble themselves, put on flesh and become human again. Then God says to Ezekiel, "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.' Therefore prophesy, 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."

We are a long way from being dry bones, but I believe that in this time, God also speaks to us when our hope falters, God speaks to us and says, “I will open your doors and bring you back.” Because God is a God of resurrection, a God of new beginnings, an Easter God.

We see that in the gospel reading. Lazarus dies and is placed in a tomb. Jesus is getting on the last nerve of the authorities and is risking his life going toward Jerusalem. But he shows up. Late.

And Mary and Martha are beside themselves. Their brother has become sick and has died and where was Jesus? Didn't he care? “The sisters [had] sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard it, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

Does that remind you of last week's reading? When asked who had sinned to cause the man to be born blind, Jesus said, ““Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Look what John is doing here. The blind man was healed to show that Jesus is the light of the world. And Lazarus was raised to show what exactly? Jesus tells Mary, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” Lazarus is raised to show that Jesus the Christ is resurrection and life.

In the valley of the dry bones, the Spirit of God breathes life into the dead. In the world of Martha and Mary, Jesus calls and Lazarus rises. In our world, the Spirit calls to us and new life, resurrection happens.

That is why we call ourselves an Easter people, because we know that Easter always comes, that resurrection always happens. That is the hope that we have received in our baptism when we died to the world and were raised to new life in Christ. That is the hope we have when we celebrate the Eucharist – that the life of God comes into us – that the one who is the resurrection and the life is part of us and we are part of him.

Good Friday is coming up. Next Sunday we will remember the triumphal ride into Jerusalem and the disaster that followed. There is disaster in this world and we are not immune to it. But we know that after the pain and grief of Good Friday, after the stunned silence of Holy Saturday, comes Easter Day. We know that even though it seems that all is lost and God's people are sent into exile, away from everything they knew, everything familiar, the bones of the dead are knit together, the valley of dry bones comes to life.

There is always resurrection, there is always new life. Even when it seems that God is not showing up, even when it seems that Jesus is busy somewhere else. Resurrection is coming and it is not just on the last day as Martha said, "I know that [Lazarus] will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Resurrection is here and now because Jesus is here and now. Resurrection is happening in our hearts and in our lives. Our challenge is to live that resurrection everyday.

May God give us all the eyes of Ezekiel to see the new life that God is breathing among us. Right here, right now.