

Reflection & Prayer

This week's Old Testament Lesson comes from Ezekiel chapter 37 – The Valley of the Dry Bones. The encounter between prophet Ezekiel and God in a time when the Israelites were in Babylonian captivity (likely mid-500's BC) recalls the power in the breath of the Lord and the awakening of a believer's faith.

Ezekiel 37:1-14

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. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

*Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. **Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 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.**"*

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. 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.

Then God said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, 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." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. 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.' 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. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people.

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.

The word for breath in Hebrew is "ruach" (rue-ah) and it is used over 400 times in the Old Testament. It is always tied to the source of life; usually used to describe the breath of the Holy Spirit into and around us or the spirit within us. *Ruach is a word full of power and life!*

Today, and too often, we find ourselves in unfamiliar and often unsettling places. And yet, we are still surrounded and empowered by the Breath of Life, the Spirit of God, the Great Ruach – praise God! Can you imagine the strange scene that unfolded before Ezekiel? I get goosebumps just reading this passage because the words are so vivid. Our God can breathe new life into dry bones, so we can certainly count on the same sustaining Spirit to see us through every situation.

Let us pray...

God of Life, breathe a new breath into our dry bones.

We want to give you praise in every circumstance, but we falter and hold back.

Our lives are not always what we want, or prefer, or understand;

Forgive us for losing perspective and limiting your love and care of us based on our situations.

You are the Great Ruach! You are full of life and soul;

You give us the eternal, sustaining breath of the Holy Spirit.

Help us to feel your Spirit within us each day;

Keep our hearts open to the prophetic words you've given through Ezekiel,

And keep our faith alive and hopeful.

As we pray, we do not only pray for ourselves but for our families, our nation, our world.

We pray for the healing and comfort of those who are sick,

And for the strength and patience of caregivers and physicians.

We pray for the food and provisions of those who lack necessities,

And for the humility and compassion of leaders and providers.

We pray for the perseverance of those who serve others,

And for the gratefulness of those who receive.

We pray for the safety of those who protect others,

And that the need for protection is minimal.

We pray for the faith to face the unknown,

And for the deeper faith to walk through it.

Spirit, you are the Great Ruach!

Awaken our hearts the mysteries of faith and

Remind us that your breath lives within us.

Amen.