

Sermon Note: Dry Bones, Flames, and a New Spirit

Pentecost Sunday

Introduction

This is Pentecost Sunday! In the Christian tradition, this is sometimes celebrated as the birthday of the universal church. This Sunday we will explore how the gift of the Holy Spirit inspires us to new life, new ministry, new ways of being community and the church!

Illustration Video

<https://youtu.be/tdmyoMe4iHM?si=2or1sEQanS5lh9Dj>

A clip from the 2004 film *Miracle*, where Coach Brooks prepares the team for the final match against their Soviet opponents.

Video Discussion Questions

1. How does Coach Brooks' speech in the clip from *Miracle* inspire the players to play at their best?
2. Can you identify specific phrases or moments in the speech that you find particularly inspiring?
3. What does Coach Brooks' say or bring (non-verbal) that contributes to their sense of inspiration?
4. Have you ever been in a situation where someone's words or actions inspired you to achieve something you didn't think possible? If so, what was it and how did it impact you?
5. In what ways do you believe inspiration plays a role in achieving personal or collective goals, as depicted in the clip?
6. Reflecting on your own experiences, can you recall a time when you inspired someone else or were inspired by someone else's actions or words? What happened? What was the result?
7. Do you think inspiration differs from motivation? If so, how is it different and why is it important to recognize this difference?
8. Do you believe that inspiration is something that can be intentionally cultivated, or is it more spontaneous and unpredictable?
9. What steps can individuals or communities take to foster an environment where inspiration thrives and drives positive change?
10. In what ways can you be more receptive to inspiration?

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (CEB)

¹The Lord's power overcame me, and while I was in the Lord's spirit, he led me out and set me down in the middle of a certain valley. It was full of bones. ²He led me through them all around, and I saw that there were a great many of them on the valley floor, and they were very dry.

³He asked me, "Human one, can these bones live again?"

I said, "Lord God, only you know."

⁴He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the Lord's word! ⁵The Lord God proclaims to these bones: I am about to put breath in you, and you will live again. ⁶I will put sinews on you,

place flesh on you, and cover you with skin. When I put breath in you, and you come to life, you will know that I am the Lord.”

⁷I prophesied just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the bones came together, bone by bone. ⁸When I looked, suddenly there were sinews on them. The flesh appeared, and then they were covered over with skin. But there was still no breath in them.

⁹He said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, human one! Say to the breath, The Lord God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live.”

¹⁰I prophesied just as he commanded me. When the breath entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, an extraordinarily large company.

¹¹He said to me, “Human one, these bones are the entire house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely finished.’ ¹²So now, prophesy and say to them, The Lord God proclaims: I’m opening your graves! I will raise you up from your graves, my people, and I will bring you to Israel’s fertile land. ¹³You will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, my people. ¹⁴I will put my breath[a] in you, and you will live. I will plant you on your fertile land, and you will know that I am the Lord. I’ve spoken, and I will do it. This is what the Lord says.”

Acts 2:1-8, 11b-21 (CEB)

¹When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. ⁴They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

⁵There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages. ⁷They were surprised and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all the people who are speaking Galileans, every one of them? ⁸How then can each of us hear them speaking in our native language? ^{11b}We hear them declaring the mighty works of God in our own languages!” ¹²They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, “What does this mean?” ¹³Others jeered at them, saying, “They’re full of new wine!”

¹⁴Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, “Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! ¹⁵These people aren’t drunk, as you suspect; after all, it’s only nine o’clock in the morning! ¹⁶Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.
Your young will see visions.
Your elders will dream dreams.

- ¹⁸ Even upon my servants, men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.
- ¹⁹ I will cause wonders to occur in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood and fire and a cloud of smoke.
- ²⁰ The sun will be changed into darkness,
and the moon will be changed into blood,
before the great and spectacular day of the Lord comes.
- ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. What first comes to mind when you hear the terms “Holy Spirit” or “Holy Ghost”?
2. What does the Pentecost narrative in Acts 2 have to do with the Holy Spirit?
3. What strikes you as odd or confusing about the passage in Acts or Ezekiel? Acts 2:12 says “All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’”
4. Do you often talk about the Holy Spirit in Church or Christian study?
5. What does it mean for God’s Holy Spirit to be within us? Ezekiel 37:14 says “I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live...”
6. What seems to be the importance of the Holy Spirit’s function in our faith?

Add'l (Optional) Discussion Questions

1. What were the main signs accompanying the Holy Spirit’s arrival on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2? Why do you think the excitement and experience shared on that day were important for the disciples and the early church? (Think back to the Gospels and what happened before the Book of Acts.)
2. Describe the vision Ezekiel sees in chapter 37. What does God command Ezekiel to do? Is there anything that surprises you in this story?
3. Do you think “dry bones” would still work as a metaphor for death today? Can you think of other metaphors that might communicate something similar to “bringing life to something dead” set in today’s world?
4. How did the crowd react to the disciples speaking in different languages, and what was Peter’s explanation for this event?
5. If you had been there on the day of Pentecost, how might you have reacted to witnessing these events?
6. In what ways can we see the theme of “bringing life to the dead” in our world today? How can this vision inspire us to act in our communities?
7. Reflecting on the vision of the dry bones and the story of Pentecost, what lessons could we learn about hope and transformation in seemingly hopeless situations?

Weekly Action

Once again, we would like you to spend time in prayer and listening to God. Pray for God’s inspiration. Like the disciples, recognize that God may inspire you to do something in a new way or even something you’ve never done before! Consider this sense of inspiration alongside all that you know about the God of love and the redeeming love of Jesus Christ. If you feel that sense of inspiration—a still small voice, a strange warming of

your heart, whatever other ways the Spirit may be present for you—speak with someone you trust about it. Talk through it, brainstorm, and allow the Spirit to continue to inspire in this conversation. Then, get to work!

Prayer

We, the people of the Cross and the Flame, pray to you O God! Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit! We pray your Holy Breath might rattle and shake within us— dismantling the old and resurrecting the new. We pray your Holy Wind will blow the embers of our souls afire— giving warmth to our hearts and light to our lives. We pray your Holy Language of love will override all barriers— bringing us closer to one another in life and in faith. We, the people of the Cross and the Flame, know your gospel story is alive within us—granting us the power through the Holy Spirit to transform the world for the sake of the kingdom! May it be so! We pray this in the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.