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Ezekiel 37:1-14
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Dry Stories

Good Morning Church. Ezekiel's vision of a valley of dry bones is a mysterious look at God turning a valley of skeletons into living people. It is an impossibility, which is exactly the point. As I read this passage this week, I began to realize the power of resurrection is the power of hope.

Prayer: Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you. Our resurrection and hope, Amen

When have you been in a dry place? Maybe you are in a dry place today. If so, then this scripture is for you. Not only because it is a vision of radical, impossible hope but because this vision was given to a hopeless people.

Ezekiel is an exile prophet. He writes from the River Chebar, a tributary of the Euphrates, in Babylon. The unimaginable had already happened. The Babylonians came and destroyed Jerusalem, carrying away Ezekiel, the king, and the rest of Judah's leadership into exile. How do you react to such devastation? What story do you tell about what your people went through? Bitterness? Revenge? Or something else? People throughout history have faced similar struggles to Ezekiel. So I hope that as a people of peace, our hearts will be opened to people who went through or are going through similar trauma that Ezekiel went through.

This year I've not been able to get the people of Ukraine out of my mind. Ukraine is an ancestral homeland for some in our congregation. Their bodies are still fresh, and God only knows what will happen to those people.

Our own land is drenched in the blood of indigenous lives, especially during the California Genocide around the gold rush. As I think about the prayer for Appachie Stronghold last Sunday, I remember our denomination is praying for these people in a valley of dry bones.

Or maybe we can consider our spiritual ancestors, the anabaptists exiled from country to country. Hoping for a land where they would be tolerated and allowed to practice their interpretation of the scriptures in peace.

These dry stories of people up against the odds. A small people face an imposing empire. I don't know. Maybe only the story of indigenous peoples comes close to the pain and hopelessness of exile. But there is so much that we can learn from Ezekeil's vision.

It is full of mysterious questions that one could ponder for a lifetime.

He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know."

Ezekiel's dry bones illicit such beautiful imagery.

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.

Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

Ultimately this vision explains itself.

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.

I think it is also important to note that this promise of the resurrection of the people also comes with restoration. When God returns the exiles, he will clean them from all their idols, replace their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh, and follow all of God's laws. Then they shall be God's people, and God shall be their God. Is it right to have such radical hope in our time? Hope that humanity will be set right? Is it okay to be optimistic and say that the glass is half-full and about to get filled?

I cannot tell you. All I can tell you is that in Ezekeil's time and place of great dryness and hopelessness, Ezekiel told a story of hope so impossible his metaphor was resurrecting long-dead bones. What I can say is that no empire, no evil, can last forever. And when the great storm is over, we can lift up our wings and fly.