



Can These Bones Live?

This Sunday is Pentecost. The Sunday we traditionally read Acts, the story of tongues of fire descending upon the disciples, and all those around them hear of the great deeds of God in their own language. The gift of the Holy Spirit. The birth of the church. But, as I sit here on this rainy morning, that same Holy Spirit is leading me to Ezekiel, so I follow. As I do, the words of the prophet blend together and I find myself asking:

Can these bones live? Only you know, Lord....
And I hear the answer:
I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life.

There is an intimacy and promise in what I hear. A promise being held out to me in the quiet encouraging me to step into wonder. The wonder of memories of my past. The yearning for what is yet to come. So, I thought I would share with you my musings on the Holy Spirit as we stand on this threshold of Pentecost.

There are times when I feel truly alive. Filled with purpose. The kind that fills me with joy - - not an easy joy, but a meaningful one. The kind of purpose that allows me to forget myself and that then allows me to come back to myself and realize that I am part of something, witnessing something, greater than myself.

Sometimes that means I am simply overcome with knowing the presence of the Spirit is with me in a moment. Other times, it is when I know I am doing something hard, difficult, but that it is right and that I am not alone. Moments when I feel God's presence as close to me as my next breath and I know that I have come to life. The Holy Spirit descending upon me, flowing around me, through me, filling me with wonder.

Then there are other times when I find myself asking, "God, where are you? I do not feel your presence. I seem to have lost my sense of purpose. I do not feel truly alive." Moments when I ask myself, "Can my bones live yet again?" And I pray, "Lord, bring me back to life. I want to be filled with your Spirit so that I can sense you using me to your purpose. Your purpose for my life, so I might sense the greater meaning of my life, *your* meaning for my life, in a moment."

What kept me returning to Guatemala time and time again, what kept me yearning to be there no matter how hard it became, was this ebb and flow between wonder and longing. There I could more easily forget myself, lose myself, in the greater purpose, in the moments that unfolded around me, and in the work. The work that helped me see in a flash that as small as I was, somehow God could use me. Use me when I got it right. Use me when I made a mistake. And, I knew somehow in the forgetting of myself, I could find myself.

Now I stand on a different kind of threshold. By now, you all know I will be stepping down as Faith In Practice's CEO on September 1. And, I find myself wondering how will the Holy Spirit show up in my life in a new and surprising way, now that I will not be meeting God in Guatemala as I have done for more than twenty years. I am asking, anticipating with wonder, how the Holy Spirit will lead me into moments of forgetting myself, so that I might find myself, my purpose in a new way, in the new community that God surely is preparing for me. Wondering how I will 'come to life' in a new way.

So, I am inviting you to join me as together we stand on the threshold of Pentecost, to view Pentecost in a more intimate and personal way this year. I invite you to reflect upon the ways in which the Spirit has moved and breathed in your own life. As close to you as your very next breath. The moments of wonder. The times of forgetting yourself which led you to find your true self. And the moments of longing. The moments when you asked the question, "Can these bones live?" And, as you do, I invite you to step into Pentecost with me as we anticipate the ways in which the Holy Spirit shall lead us in both our moments of wonder and of longing. As we open ourselves to losing ourselves in God's greater purpose for our lives. Trusting that as we do so, we will find our true selves. Our true and joyful selves that we recognize when we know ourselves to be living into God's reconciling work in the world uniquely and as a community of faith.

Blessings,
Rev. Linda L. McCarty
President & CEO

The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life....I will put breath in you, and you will come to life...'

Ezekiel 37:1-6



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