|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Day of Pentecost |
| WhitsundayYear BRCL |

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Acts 2:1-21

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Psalm 104:25-35, 37

**The Collect**

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**The First Lesson**

**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 he 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 Response**

**Psalm 104:25-35, 37**

***Benedic, anima mea***

25 O Lord, how manifold are your works! \*
in wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.

26 Yonder is the great and wide sea
with its living things too many to number, \*
creatures both small and great.

27 There move the ships,
and there is that Leviathan, \*
which you have made for the sport of it.

28 All of them look to you \*
to give them their food in due season.

29 You give it to them; they gather it; \*
you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

30 You hide your face, and they are terrified; \*
you take away their breath,
and they die and return to their dust.

31 You send forth your Spirit, and they are created; \*
and so you renew the face of the earth.

32 May the glory of the Lord endure for ever; \*
may the Lord rejoice in all his works.

33 He looks at the earth and it trembles; \*
he touches the mountains and they smoke.

34 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; \*
I will praise my God while I have my being.

35 May these words of mine please him; \*
I will rejoice in the Lord.

37 Bless the Lord, O my soul. \*
Hallelujah!

**The New Testament**

**Acts 2:1-21**

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs-- in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

`In the last days it will be, God declares,

that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.

Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' "

**The Gospel**

**John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15**

Jesus said to his disciples, ”When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Blessings upon these words spoken and these words heard, may they be Your words.

Good morning and thank you St. Paul’s for hosting us and thank you people of St. Patrick’s for coming.

We have talked before about possibly worshipping together. We are two small churches with attendance that over the years has dwindled. We find ourselves in a sea of Episcopal churches. One day I counted 5 Episcopal church that I could drive to from St. Patrick’s, each in about 10 minutes. Most of these were built in the 50s, during our nations’ highest attendance of church. If you were going to plan it from the get-go at this moment, you wouldn’t have quite so many Episcopal churches.

And so today, our congregations are smaller and we gather for fellowship! After all, it is the church’s birthday! It’s good to have a party, liturgical and otherwise.

Our two churches face difficult times, there is no question. And, not to worry, I am not going to dwell on that. First, there is the truth that God is in charge of the future of the church.… God HAS this… We can wonder about what church will look like as there are less people who attend church. We have seen this same thing has already happened in Europe, and yet there is a steady rise of church attendance in the global south. Regular attendance at church is now once a month, when it used to be once a week. However, for us to worry about the future church does as much as good as the birds or the lilies of the field worrying. God will provide; God does not turn God’s back on God’s people. Let us also not make any presumption that the future of the church universal is the same as the future of St. Paul’s or St. Patrick’s. God has been at this relational business with humanity for a long time and we can take some assurance in that.

Ezekiel teaches us about this type of trusting in God. Ezekiel was a prophet during the time of the Israel’s exile in Babylon. We hear in Ezekiel’s writings (or dictation) wild and crazy images… where else in the Bible are you going to get the story of the Valley of Dry Bones? (*dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones*). However, we also hear in Ezekiel hope an an assurance of relationship with the Divine. The theology of the prophet Ezekiel is Davidic, in that there is always the expectation that even though Jerusalem has fallen, that God does not turn God’s back on Israel, God does not turn God’s back on the Davidic covenant. When it feels like God is temporarily turning away, it is God’s judgment, which is still part of God’s grace and love— the grace of God that then pulls and brings us back. Someday there will be another king on David’s throne. God is able to put sinews back on bones, cover them with flesh and put breath in the bodies. You may be skeptical, but even if this image is metaphorical; you get the point. Possibilities are still possibilities, because God’s involvement is still present. The wonder that people breathe at all is a testimony to God’s involvement. God recreating life in the valley of the dry bones is no less miraculous than life created to begin with.

This breath that animates, that gives life, this very spirit, is akin to or the same as the Holy Spirit in Acts that arrives with wind and fire. We may be well familiar with what can be understood without language, our common humanity—the pain we have from seeing others suffering wherever they are or the joy we have that infects us from the smile of people, particularly children wherever they are. There are enough barriers to understanding. Language understanding language may just be the love of Christ that breaks down barriers. This cacophony of understanding, our very utterances that make us understood in Christ can rise above language. Even though there is this cacophony, God’s indwelling of the Spirit is never by accident. God working in us provides a deep understanding of the other, a love that transcends language, skin pigment, nationality, and all barriers. We are called to love beyond the barriers— with intention, not erratically.

This Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the spirit of Jesus dwelling with us, is what gives us Christianity, it is the key to understanding who we are and whose we are. We claim Christ crucified and risen and are then also claimed. This claim on our heart gives us the deep understanding. It is the birthday of the church that we celebrate today in our little Episcopal Churches. It is the birthday of the church, imperfect though she may be, when truth arrives— truth of understanding that comes with the Spirit. The Davidic and Eternal King has arrived and has given truth over confusion. The Gospel of Jesus Christ becomes clear with the illumination of the truth of the Spirit.