

Ezekiel 37
“Back Upon Your Feet”
Palm Sunday

March 29, 2015
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Rev. Brent Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Finding Bones]

Did you hear the news?

West coast to east coast, present age to ages past, bones have been found.

Now, on the one hand, finding a bone is not an ordinary run-of-the-mill experience. Have you ever found a bone? I never have!	But on the other hand, the occurrence of finding bones is not a unique or one-of-a-kind event either!
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When bones are found, the police are usually called.
Detectives, forensic scientists, and medical examiners – CID, CSI, and FBI...
All come upon the scene.
All are focused upon solving the crime, uncovering the mystery.
But Ezekiel has a different experience.

Did you hear the news? Ezekiel was walking in the valley, and he found a bone. Being led by the Spirit of the Lord through the middle of a valley, there upon the ground was a bone. And another there! And another there! And another there! In the valley, across the plain, it was full of bones, and Ezekiel walked among them with God. There upon the ground were bones.

[Ezekiel’s Bones] Ezekiel, the Old Testament prophet was commissioned, was called by God. Ezekiel was not living in the Southern kingdom. He wasn’t living in the Northern kingdom. Ezekiel was living in exile. He was in the first group of God’s people taken away from the Promised Land. And when we meet Ezekiel, he had been living in exile for five years!

Now, at the age of 30, it was traditional that a man, who earnestly prepared for the priesthood, would normally enter the Levitical priesthood. But being exiled, there was no priesthood. So instead of calling Ezekiel to be a priest, God called Ezekiel to be a prophet, to be God’s mouthpiece. In his call, Ezekiel was given a scroll with written words of *lament and mourning and woe*. God said, “**Open your**

mouth and eat what I give you” (Ez. 2:8). God wanted Ezekiel to speak His Words, God’s Words – to speak God’s Word to rebellious people.

“This is what the Sovereign Lord says,” said Ezekiel. First Ezekiel spoke to Israel. He prophesied judgment against Israel. Then Ezekiel spoke to the nations. And he prophesied judgment against the nations – Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt. He spoke judgment against the nations – the nations that surrounded the Israelites. For eight years he spoke words of *lament and mourning and woe*. He spoke the Words of God!

Then, in 587 B.C. Jerusalem fell.
All of God’s people, all of them were taken away into exile.
The doom preached by Ezekiel – came true.
The hope of God’s people was gone.

It seemed to them this was the *total* and *final* end.
It seemed they were cut off, separated from God by being taken into exile.
Once a people, a people of God, the Israelites were scattered into exile,
and in a vision Ezekiel saw bones. Lots of bones!
There upon the ground were bones.

[*Our Bones*]

For the Israelites, the vision of bones proved they were separated from God.
Have you ever felt separated from God?
Have you ever felt that God was no longer there?
Then, there upon the ground were bones.

You have prayed that God would give you the skill to be good. You just wanted to make the team. You didn’t have to be the star. And you were willing to work hard too. You have practiced day after day, hour after hour, and you were willing to practice more. But you did not make the team. How could God not help? There upon the ground are bones.

Jesus healed many people. You know the Bible stories. Jesus healed the lame and the blind. Surely He can take away this heart condition.
You pray, and you wait ... and wait... and wait. You take the medicine.
But when you sit on the doctor’s examining table and your bones ache with anxiety only to hear the test results, “the medicine is not helping.” You aren’t looking for a miracle; you just wanted God to take away the pain, to give you a few more years with your family. How could God not help? There upon the ground are bones

There are times that we see bones on the ground. There are times when we feel that we are cut off from God. There are times when it seems to be the *total* and *final* end.

[*Ezekiel Prophesied*] God told Ezekiel to prophesy.

- (1) Ezekiel prophesied to Israel.
- (2) He prophesied to the nations.
- (3) And now, in a vision, God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones.

There scattered in the valley, across the plain were bones. Lot of bones!
And Ezekiel said to them, “***Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!***”
And the bones came together, bone to bone.
Then Ezekiel commanded the wind,
 “***Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain,
 that they may live.***”
And breath entered them;
 God breathed life into Adam, and God breathed life into Eve.
Ezekiel prophesied and breath entered the bones.
They came to life, and they stood up on their feet.
There upon the ground ***WERE*** bones – Dry bones that were brought to life.

And now those dry bones were back upon their feet.
And God’s people were back upon their feet.

As once thought, the hope was not lost.
As once thought, His people were not cut off.

The exile was neither <i>total</i> nor <i>final</i> because the Sovereign Lord heard the plea of the house of Israel.	The exile ... was neither <i>total</i> nor <i>final</i> because the Sovereign Lord always had a <i>remnant</i> and the Sovereign Lord always makes <i>renewal</i> .
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And because of what God had done, God’s people were back upon their feet!

[*Christ*] On Good Friday, there were bones upon the ground...
Bones that were lying in a tomb and a borrowed tomb at that.
Bones lying behind a large rock,
bones lying behind the Roman guards,
bones lying safely guarded until Sunday Morning.
Upon the ground laid the body of Christ. His bones were upon the ground.

But before his bones were on the ground, his bones were upon the cross.

Christ's body was nailed to the cross.

Christ's body was there upon Mount Calvary.

His body was there on Golgotha.

His body was there upon that Skull rock.

And after the world became dark and the earth shook, after Christ said "***It is finished,***" not a bone was broken (Jn 19). Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The legs were broken of the thief on the left, and the legs were broken of the thief on the right. But they did not break Jesus' legs because he was already dead. And His body was placed in a tomb. There were bones upon the ground.

During this lent season, we have talked about the body parts of Christ. And here we have His bones

the bones that endured temptation,

the bones that endured the mockery of a trial, and

the bones that endured the crushing weight of the cross.

There were His bones upon the ground.

But not for long! Three days later, Christ was back upon His feet. Christ was victorious over sin, death, and the devil. Christ rose from the grave. He was back upon His feet.

[***You and Me***] There might be times that we feel that our bones are upon the ground. As for you and me, we are dead in our transgressions and we are dead in our sins. But God raises us up with Christ (Eph 2:5-6). And because of what God has done, we are back upon our feet! In Christ we are never cut off from God. Even when we don't make the team, in Christ we are back upon our feet! Even when the medicine does not work, in Christ we are back upon our feet!

In Christ we are renewed.

In Christ we part of God's remnant – yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

When the last trumpet sounds,

when Christ comes again, in the twinkling of an eye, we are back upon our feet!

In Christ we are back upon our feet! Amen!

You are the body of Christ, each one of you part of it! Amen!