

We are Not Cut Off

Pentecost

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Ezekiel 37:1-14

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“(O)ur hope is lost.” That was the sentiment of the Israelites in our Old Testament text. But perhaps they are not the only ones who feel that way.

Perhaps you feel that your hope is lost. Perhaps you feel that Thanos has come into your world and has won the war. Perhaps you feel that your friends are in dire straits and that it seems nothing can help them.

Do you feel that all is lost? Do you feel as though you have been cut off?

This morning, God speaks to us through His Word, and He challenges us to consider our position. He forces us to stop and think about what it means to be cut off. He causes us to ponder what hope is.

Verse 1

The prophet Ezekiel wrote: “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ And I answered, ‘O Lord God, you know.’”

As our Lord God takes us into pondering what it means to be lost or cut off, He takes us with Ezekiel into a place of dry bones. God has us walk around in them to see that they are indeed very dead, and indeed very, very dry. There is no blood or flesh still on them. They are completely and utterly dead. They are out in the middle of nowhere with no one near to help, if they even could have been helped. For every look and appearance, these bones are lost and have been cut completely and utterly off.

But then God poses to you the same question that He poses to Ezekiel, “‘Son of man, can these bones live?’” How do you answer? How would you—yes you—answer? Would you answer that you’re too depressed to respond? Or would you take a more faithful route? Would you answer that you know that the bones will live again at the resurrection?

Would you answer that if God so desired it, they could live here and now? Or would that be asking too much? After all, you currently feel that you are lost, that you are cut off. And here you are standing amongst piles and piles of dry, dusty bones. Do you truly believe that these bones can live again, or is that all fantasy? See how easy it is to just glance through this text and not really consider it? But today, God has given us this text to really dig into it and for Him to speak to us through it. He makes us stop and consider what the characters on the page really mean—that they mean a man, Ezekiel, who truly lived upon this planet; that they are real bones like the bones of dinosaurs you see in certain museums or of animals in the steak you eat for dinner. They speak of real, true things.

As you continue to consider how you might answer, we hear that Ezekiel responds “‘O Lord God, you know.’”

Verse 2

“Then (God) said to (Ezekiel), ‘Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, “O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon 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 he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.”

When Martha claimed that she knew Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead at the End Times, Jesus proved that He was the resurrection and the life by raising Lazarus right then and there. So also here in Ezekiel, God demonstrates that He has the power over life and death—and ultimately over everything—by raising the dusty, dry bones He had sent Ezekiel among.

God gives hope even when all hope is lost. God not only has the power to make changes in the future, but even here and now. He does this through His Word. What was Ezekiel commanded to say to the bones and to the breath? “Thus says the Lord God.” When God speaks, things happen.

At His Word, Moses delivered the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. At God’s Word, the creation came into being. And at His Word, Jesus came down from heaven to die for all of humanity.

Things may feel hopeless now, but they were much worse before you were brought to faith. Then you were not only in this sinful, messy, painful world, but you were also an enemy of God. You were dead in your trespasses. You had no hope. You were truly cut off from Him.

But again, God send His Son Jesus into the world to be the Christ, to be the one who would save you from your sins. Jesus came, He lived among us in this same sinful, messy, and painful world, and He gave His own life so that you might have hope.

Now you hear God’s Word with God’s Spirit, and you believe it. Now you have the hope that God is with you no matter what is going on in your life or in the world. And now you have the hope of everlasting life, just as God commanded Ezekiel to tell the Israelites that they did.

Verse 3

“Then (God) said to (Ezekiel), ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.” Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.’”

The Israelites at the time of Ezekiel were feeling cut off once again. They felt that their bones were “dried up” and that their hope was “lost.” They felt “cut off.” And in His usual way, God spoke directly to their situation. With Moses, God knew that the people had thought He had not heard their cries, so He assured them He had heard them. With Isaiah, Isaiah had confessed that he was a man of unclean lips from a people of unclean lips, so God sent one of His seraphim to take a coal from an altar and put it to Isaiah’s lips to demonstrate his sin was atoned for.

Today, God shows Ezekiel that He has the power to bring life even to dry bones because the people had felt that their bones were dried up. God speaks to the exact situation we need every time. The most profound way He did that was by dying in your place for your sins which deserved death, by suffering hell upon the cross because that’s what your sin deserved.

Now your sin, like Isaiah's, like Moses', and like those of the people of Israel, have been atoned for. You have hope even here and now. But you have not only hope but also a future. You have a future of eternal life with God—not in this sinful, messy, painful world, but in a restored one—and you yourself will be restored, too. “Thus says the Lord God...I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.” In Jesus' Name. Amen.