

Jesus is risen! Jesus is risen indeed! Alleluia! You look great. Really you look wonderful. But if my buddy Nick was here and he didn't have his glasses on he wouldn't be able to see you. He is near sighted, so he can see things that are near to him, but without his glasses even the front row would be blurry. With his glasses, his vision changes—he can see. Being part of Christ is like putting on a pair of glasses. Christ gives us the ability to see life in a whole new way—the way God sees.

The prophet, Ezekiel, lived during a really hard time in the history of God's people. They were headed for total destruction by the Babylonian empire. Babylon had already taken over the land and carried away many of Israel's leaders and scholars. Ezekiel was part of the second group of Jews to be carried off to Babylon in 586 BCE when Jerusalem was reduced to rubble. It's difficult for us to imagine the pain and suffering experienced by people who have been taken away from their homeland. Not only did they have to deal with the brutal treatment of their captors, they also had to adjust to a completely new culture. The people Ezekiel was speaking to had no identity, no hope, and no future. Miracles no longer seemed possible. Think about the disciples on Easter morning—they had spent three years with Jesus believing he would be the next ruler, but now he's dead—they have no hope, miracles no longer seem possible—the women tell what they have seen and the disciples don't believe, they can't see the possibility. Ezekiel was carried off by God to a valley covered with dry bones. They tell us that the bones are dry to reiterate the fact that there was no life in them. Then God asks Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?" This question is all about

vision. What can Ezekiel see? Can he only see his present circumstances or can he see the possibility of a miracle? God tells Ezekiel to start a re-formation; to re-form bodies from the bones laying dead and dry. God was asking Ezekiel to do something that looked ridiculous. God was asking the prophet—and the disciples—to act in spite of what they saw.

Ezekiel preached hope to the bones and saw them re-form into bodies. God explained—the bones represent my people who are saying, "Our hope is gone; we are cut off." They felt cut off from God, cut off from their home and their heritage, cut off from the miraculous acts of the past. Cut off from their privilege and power. Cut off from their inalienable rights. Cut off from the way things used to be. When have you felt cut off?

The disciples were cut off; fear and pain were the only things they saw. They couldn't hope. They were like my friend without his glasses, the disciples couldn't see. They couldn't see what is possible with God. The women see in a new way. Through Jesus' resurrection God is promising new life, new vision, spiritual renewal for all people—the impossible is possible. Today, most people ascribe to the belief that seeing is believing—what you see is what you get. However, as Christians we live in a sort-of post-truth era filled filled with alternative facts. What we see is not always reality, yet. We learn from Ezekiel's vision and the Jesus' resurrection, that we must not let our present situation determine our future—yes we must take into account the most brutal facts of our current reality, without giving up hope that we will prevail in the end—but the disciples were allowing the hopelessness of

what they saw, to limit their vision of what God can do. We do the same thing. It's hard to have faith in the future, if the present looks bleak—when dry bones are crying out. Philando Castile's bones are crying out. The bones of our criminal justice system cry out, our environment is crying out, those suffering from mental illness are crying out, health care reform is crying out, the poor, hungry, refugees are crying out... what bones do you hear crying out? It is like that prayer, "Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God." The present has a powerful effect on our attitudes. Yet, the beauty of following God, is that God follows us and gives us a vision of the future, God gives us the glasses to see the future. With God's vision, we can have hope in the midst of any situation. We can believe that the impossible is possible. And so we **begin now** to act on God's future.

Here's what I mean. You have to diet and exercise to lose weight. One of the hardest things about losing weight is the process. I always hope that by the second day of the diet, much of the weight will be gone. By day three my clothes should fit loosely, and by day four I can celebrate—perhaps with a donut or two. We all know that isn't how it works. In order to obtain the future goal of getting to a healthy weight, I have to start eating and exercising (acting) today. We must act now on God's promises. For many of us, our mission is unclear or difficult or we are just starting out, wondering, "Can these bones live?" asking "Where are the prophets that will preach and breath life in this valley of bones?" "Where are the **people** that will run back, telling their story of the empty tomb?" Right here. The Spirit of the Lord is upon

you, God is working through you to make the impossible, possible. You are anointed to preach good news to the poor (economic justice), preach freedom for prisoners (criminal justice), preach recovery of sight to the blind (healthcare justice), preach sustainability and connection (environmental justice). Preach the gospel and when I say preach, I mean use words only as a last resort, let your lives be the sermon. God has placed in you a vision. Jesus is creating sinew and breath in your dry bones. Preach the living gospel and see the wonders of the Lord your God become reality.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there "is" such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action." Right now God is at work. Right now Jesus has risen from the dead bringing hope and joy and a love that raises us from our death and depravity, from our sin and sadness, from our inaction and our apathy. We serve a God that can make the impossible possible. We believe: what God promised, God will do. If I'm weak... The Joy of the Lord is my strength. If I'm sad... Weeping may endure for a night, but Joy comes in the morning. When the media asks, "Can these bones live?" When our neighbor asks, "Can these bones live?" When in our dark times we ask, "Can these bones live?" We say, "Jesus is risen. Jesus is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.