

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church**  
**605 Madison St., Marshall 53559**  
**608-655-4246 holytrinitymarshall.com**  
**March 29, 2020 + Fifth Sunday in Lent**  
**Ezekiel 37:1-14, Romans 8:6-11**  
**Pastor Nancy M. Raabe**

If there was ever a constellation of readings that show how God's living Word finds us in whatever situation we are in, it is those for this week. Listen again to Ezekiel – it's almost eerie:

God said to Ezekiel, "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.'

"Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain: <sup>14</sup>I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live."

*We are cut off completely.* Many of you may feel exactly this way. We are cut off from that, which for many of us, makes life worth living: The company of others. Our morning coffee with our neighbors, the weekly card game, the monthly social group – all lost to us for an indefinite time. And of course our worship services with the extended time before and after for visiting.

I am grateful that you are watching this because it *does* connect us on a weekly basis through our cherished patterns of worship. But it makes my heart weep that I cannot see your faces or sit down next to you before the service for a quick chat. Most are able to see their grandchildren only through a wavery video connection, but it's hard to truly

interact with kids this way. We talk by phone to console one another but cannot see the expressions on each other's faces, nor can we reach out and lay a consoling hand on their arm. And no hugs...that is really a hard one.

In our second reading, Paul tells us exactly what we must do to survive during this time: Have confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit, the breath of God, to restore us. Paul writes, "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace...If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you."

Dwells – present tense. Just as the Holy Spirit came into Jesus' disciples at that first Pentecost. Just as the Holy Spirit then came into 3,000 souls when Peter, in his magnificent sermon in Acts 2:14-39, urged them to become baptized, and they did. Listen to what happened immediately after these baptisms: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and prayers."

That is where the Spirit is taking us in this time as we wait and do everything in our power to keep ourselves and others healthy. Devote yourself to the apostles' teaching; in this way you are in fellowship with them. There is so much to draw from: Paul's heartfelt letters, the majestic letter to the Hebrews, the epistles of Peter, James, and John. Read the stirring story of Jesus' raising of Lazarus in John 11, feel the astonishment of the gathered crowd at the tomb, and witness the Spirit entering their hearts. The last verse of this

reading is, “Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.”

The Holy Spirit is already in us, but we need to keep remembering that by invoking the Spirit’s presence. The song we are about to sing, from the Taize community in France, does just that. And as we go through this week, still so uncertain of the future and even of the present, experience the everyday reality of God’s promise through Ezekiel: “I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live.”

Amen.