

Gospel lesson

We back up a little today to hear more of Jesus' farewell discourse, after the Last Supper.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-086-washing-feet/>

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15 (NRSV) Jesus said:

²⁶ "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.

²⁷ You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{16:4b} "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.

⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'

⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts.

⁷ 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.

⁸ And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:

⁹ about sin, because they do not believe in me;

¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer;

¹¹ about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The word of God for the people of God

Interactive lesson



picture from
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/photo-of-people-doing-handshakes-3184416/>

What is love at first sight? <Let them respond>

How does love grow? <Let them respond>

Love between two people may begin with an initial

attraction, but it comes to fruition through building on that through many experiences, both good and bad, with each partner sometimes making mistakes.

The two become one, and if blessed to do so, may grow into a larger family unit - another step in the long series of generations across history.

Today we celebrate Pentecost as the birthday of the church. How did it start? <Let them respond>

The Holy Spirit descended and, as they were in Jesus, the apostles became one body. How did the church grow? <Let them respond>

What do you see our role in the worldwide church today? <Let them respond>

May we all hear God's call on our lives and let the power of the Holy Spirit work through us to further share the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ in all of our daily interactions.

<Hymn "Shine, Jesus, Shine"

TFWS #2173 vv.1,2>

Message: These Bones Will Live



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/these-bones-will-live/the-day-of-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/the-day-of-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

Please pray with me?

God of Creation, Savior of the World, Holy Spirit,
as we take time now to further consider today's

scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may be united and empowered in Your love, to share Your Good News with one another and the world. Amen.

We celebrate Pentecost today with “These Bones Will Live”:

“We are not just rehearsing a story from the past—we are embodying the story of the life we have in Christ with one another now. Will we join in and trust the Spirit to take what seems lifeless and breathe abundant life into being?”



picture from MMMS collection

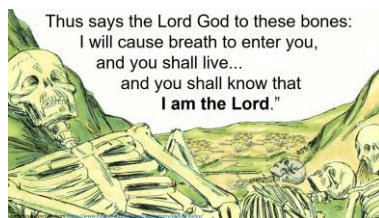
During a drought, crops do not usually grow very well. If you have the equipment, you can mitigate its effects by watering fields – but that only works as long as supply water is available. And because wild vegetation does not grow well, critters are more likely to munch on what few crops a farmer does grow.

If a drought goes too long, it can ruin a farm. If rain comes in time, it can save a farm after a dry spell, but it has to be both enough and not too much:

Enough to rehydrate, but not so much as to drown it.

Do you ever feel like this world is in a drought of Spirit? There seems to be a disdain for organized religion, making it difficult to feel comfortable talking about church with non-members. People are more isolated, hiding online instead of getting out in the community. Many people are fearful about having enough to survive, or about losing comforts they have worked hard to obtain.

Feeling desperate for too long can cause problems emotionally, physically, and mentally. Statistics indicate that mental health issues have been on the rise for decades and continue to be. Many people are at a loss for how to live well, regardless of income.



background picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/ezekiel-valley/>

The Israelites in Ezekiel's day were in the midst of an identity crisis, at a loss for how to live well. God had made an everlasting covenant (Gen 17:13) with Abraham, promising countless offspring who would prosper over enemies (Gen 22:17).

Yet here they were, captured by Babylon, their kingdom lost; as for being "people of God" they were as good as dead, for how could they live faithfully for God when in captivity to others?

They had forgotten with whom they were in covenant.

To nurture the Israelites yet not overwhelm them with direct contact, God chose one from among them, Ezekiel, to bear God's word to the people – and it was good news, a promise of restoration and new life. Despite the weight of oppression making them groan, the people had hope in God. They held to the covenant laws. It was a start that grew in grace until they could finally return to the Promised Land.

Historically, it is amazing that after such a long exile, the people did keep their faith identity, returning to Jerusalem generations later to rebuild the temple and worship the one Almighty God rather than adopting the polytheistic faith of their conquerors. To me, that is a sign that God was with them, tending their needs so they **could** be faithful and the entire world could be blessed through them.

After Jesus died, His disciples had thought all was lost, then were astounded and celebrated when Jesus returned from the dead. But then Jesus ascended into heaven. What were they to do next?

Just as He had forewarned them about His death, Jesus also told His disciples to expect the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, to guide them once He (Jesus) was no longer with them in body.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/qnpi-acts-pentecost/>

Although Jesus had ascended, God was with the disciples, tending to their needs: the Holy Spirit transformed them into apostles, capable of sharing the Good News as Jesus had commanded. They became the bearers of God's Word into the world – and the people of the world, trapped in Sin, were confused.

Some sneered and mocked those teaching God's ways. Even today, we see that some ridicule the faithful and deny the truth we tell in our words and actions.

Others listened, surprised to hear the preaching in their own languages; in amazement and hope, many accepted the Good News to be written on their hearts. It was a start that grew in grace despite oppression by nonbelievers and mistakes made by the faithful.

I was struck by how each person heard in their native language: In today's terms, they heard the message in a way in which they could fundamentally relate to what was proclaimed, could understand the meaning, and recognized that there was amazing power at work.

When we reach out to others to proclaim the Good News, are we giving the message in a way that people can fundamentally relate to God's love, can

understand the atonement for sin available in Jesus, can recognize the power of the Holy Spirit at work?

Paul wrote to the Romans about the Spirit helping us in our weakness. Just as the apostles were enabled to be understood in other languages, so the Holy Spirit enables us to be understood when we share Jesus' love with others. So let the Holy Spirit work through you!



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/these-bones-will-live/the-day-of-pentecost-year-b-lectionary-planning-notes/the-day-of-pentecost-year-b-graphics>

As always, pray first, asking for God's wisdom and direction – and listen to what God tells you.

Sometimes it is as a quiet whisper, sometimes as a violent rushing wind with fiery effects. But trust the power of God to renew and restore life.

Look around you to see where the Spirit is directing you and do what you can in faith to nurture others with knowledge of Jesus.

- † Does your current situation remind you of a Bible passage? Can you share that insight verbally with the person in your company, or do you need to simply reapply the love/caring shown there in the new situation?
- † Did you experience an “Aha!” or feel a growing drive to do something differently in the community? Who (or what) might you be nurturing in faith?

I have heard concern expressed about the vitality of our little church by various members at different times over the years. We may sometimes feel like dead bones in a dry valley, but if we keep our focus on God, our faith in Jesus, and our trust the power of the Holy Spirit as we reach out in love, new life will be breathed into our faith community.

These bones will live!

Amen.