

Presbyterian Church of Henderson

Worship Service 8:30AM and 10:30AM

Liturgy for the Service We Never Had

March 29, 2020

***Call to Worship**

O mortal, can these bones live?

Only the Lord God knows.

O people, hope in the Lord.

With the Lord there is steadfast love and great power to redeem.

***Hymn** Presbyterian Hymnal 220 "All People That on Earth Do Dwell"

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise;
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His Name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? the Lord our God is good;
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

***Call to Confession**

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. Trusting in the Spirit of God, let us confess our sin.

***Prayer of Confession** (unison)

**O Lord, if you held our sin against us, who could live, who could stand?
We seem to have more faith in death than hope in your promise of life.
We seek peace through war and find security in weapons. We abandon
the hungry, sick, and dying, and pursue wealth by making others poor.
And even so, you love us; still there is forgiveness with you! Therefore
we worship you; for you alone, O Lord, can save us from death and
redeem us from our sin. Amen.**

***Assurance of Pardon**

O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! If Jesus Christ dwells in you, the Spirit of God will be your life and the grace of God will be your righteousness. And if the Holy Spirit dwells in you, then God, who raised Jesus from the dead, will also give life to your mortal bodies. Friends, this is the good news of the gospel: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

***Passing the Peace**

May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

And also with you!

Let us share with one another a sign of Christ's Peace.

***Gloria Patri (PH 579)**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

Prayer for Illumination

O Lord, we wait for you, and in your Word we trust. By the power of your Spirit, set our hearts and minds on the source of life and peace: Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Old Testament Ezekiel 37:1-14

Psalm Psalm 130

New Testament Romans 8:6-11

SERMON "Boot Camp for the Soul: Dead End"

Lectionary Texts

March 29, 2020

OPENING:

- Riding my bicycle to commute to church and back.
- It was 22 miles one way and took me under two hours.
- Mornings were easy, I was full of energy. It was cool and quiet.
- But one day, on the return ride home, after a full day of work, lunch was 4-5 hours ago (my stomach was empty), the streets of San Gabriel Valley were busy and crowded, I rode about 10 miles, and I hit my physical limit.
- In the world of athletics, it is called, "hitting the wall."
- Dehydrated, no food, physically tired, my legs were cramping up, my vision was blurry, I became dizzy, and every muscle in my body began to ache. I had to stop. I had reached my absolute physical end.
- I literally thought I was going to die with 12 miles to go.
- In a boot camp training situation, soldiers become stronger by being pushed to their absolute physical limits

- In our Boot Camp for the Soul series we reach a point in our Lenten journey where the lectionary texts (Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11, John 11:1-45) all describe death, hopelessness, the feeling of abandonment from God: "Dead End"

- This week in our Lenten journey toward Easter, I felt the lectionary texts combined offers us insight when you feel like you have reached your dead end.

When You Have Reached Your Dead End—

1. See the Bigger Picture (Ez. 37:1-14)

Ezek. 37:1-3 The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

- After the Fall of Jerusalem, the people were scattered and discouraged.
- Most people may have doubted God's promise of restoration.
- Their present condition of Israel's diaspora may have worked against the dream of restoration ever being made whole again.
- Israel was in deep despair with no hope.
- So in these well read verses of dry bones, God stresses the fact to his prophet Ezekiel that His sovereign power and ability is able carry out the promise of restoration.
- In a vision, God brings Ezekiel to a valley that was full of bones.
- Being a good Jewish prophet, he knew that these bones would make him unclean.
- The bones were also "very dry"
- The dryness suggests that lot of time has passed since these people had died and they were beyond resuscitation.
- The implication of the dismal scene was that there was no hope of the nation's people returning to life and living again in the homeland.
- The Lord's question to Ezekiel was intriguing, "Mortal can these bones live?"
- His response, "O Lord God, YOU know."
- Sometimes in the midst of despair, only God can shake us to our senses and help us realize that **God is in control of what is possible during the times that seem impossible!**
- Seeing from God's vantage point (the bigger picture) takes our eyes off ourselves and helps us see our despair in a larger context, God's context.
- God was showing Ezekiel that all the power in the restoration of Israel lies at the hand of God and to not be encumbered by the what seems like a hopeless situation.
- Friends, God is the bigger picture.
- All we need to do is allow Him to lift our eyes to the great hope that only God can fulfill.
- EX: When we live a series of rainy and cloudy days, the day the sun breaks through makes us want to go outside a look up to the beautiful blue skies. But if you are always looking down (for one reason or another) you will miss the joy of the beauty of the moment.
- In the same way, God wants to take our situations of despair, and to look up, and trust that God is in control, and that he desires to bring life and wholeness.
- Do we look at our present circumstances with eyes of impossibility?
- God wants us to look up, and see that greater things will come because God is in control.

- During this season of Lent, the focus of Jesus going to the cross may seem like a hopeless situation, but God wants to demonstrate that God will prevail in any circumstance.

When You Have Reached Your Dead End—

2. Wait Patiently (Psalm 130)

Psalm 130:1-2 Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

- This psalm opens with a cry rising out of the depths of distance and alienation of the writers soul for mercy.
- Here the psalmist has hit rock bottom; his own DEAD END is where nothing can satisfy but God alone in prayer.
- He is crying out, "Hear me O Lord as I pray...from the depths of my despair"
- The text continues with an appeal to the forgiveness of God
(vv. 3-4) *If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.*
- So the psalmist knows that God is a God who forgives
- The word "mark" (keep a record of) means to hold one accountable for their sin.
- The psalmist is saying that no one could stand if God dealt with sinners according to what they deserved.
- The solution to the depths of his cry for mercy is to turn to the forgiveness of God
- The reason the Lord does not keep record for of sin is because of His forgiveness.

(vv. 5-6) *I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.*

- Why would the psalmist need to wait when he has the Lord's forgiveness?
- Forgiveness has already been granted and received.
- He was waiting for the full restoration of God of his divine power and peace.
- As he waits, he trusts in the word of God.
- ISW: Lent is a period of waiting.
- When we are in despair, God's restoration sometimes take time.
- We may have God's forgiveness, but sometime the feeling of restoration and wholeness take time
- The waiting period is the boot camp for the soul
- It feels like a DEAD END.
- The psalmist uses a metaphor of the night watchman who stands guard to the city anticipating for the dawn of light as a signal that his shift is over.
- In the same way the night watchman waits for the breaking of dawn, this Lenten season we wait for the hope, celebration, and joy found on Easter morning.
- Are you waiting for the restoration of God?
- Understand that our boot camp is the conditioning we need to anticipate something greater.

When You Have Reached Your Dead End—

3. Alter Your Thinking (Romans 8:6-11)

Romans 8:6-8 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

- The key word in this text is the word "mind" (which means being mindful or aspiring for)
- The mind of a human being can be set upon only one thing—either the desires of the flesh or the desires of the spirit
- In this text Paul contrasts the difference between the mentality of those who live according to the spirit with those who live according to the flesh
- You may ask...so what difference does it make whether a person is mindful of the flesh or of the spirit?
- Paul writes that the mind set on the flesh leads to death (both spiritual and physical) as compared to the mind set on the Spirit leads to life and peace.
- One mind set is hostile and rebellious toward God, and the other strives to please God and manifests the fruit of the spirit.
- In our boot camp training for the soul, our thought life is the restless "muscle" that needs to be trained or disciplined according to the things that are pleasing to God.
- Lent has always been a time when people "give up" something so that they heighten their spiritual awareness.
- The discipline helps them draw near to God and direct one's mind towards the life of Christ
- Our mindset has much to do with our soul training.
- *2 Corinthians 10:5 we take every thought captive to obey Christ*
- How is your thought life this Lenten season?

When You Have Reached Your Dead End—

4. Let Jesus Be in Control (John 11:1-45)

- In the gospel lectionary text, we find the story of the death and healing of Lazarus.
- This miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead was Jesus' public evidence to his claim, "I am the Resurrection and the Life"
- Physical death becomes the metaphor of what sin does in the spiritual realm.
- As physical death ends life and separates people, so spiritual death is the separation of people from God.
- The miracle of Lazarus is an illustration that Jesus has the ability offer new life physically and spiritually
- In the context of this passage earlier in John 10, Jesus had withdrawn from Jerusalem prior to his return to the city for his final passover. (John 10:40)
- In this place on the other side of the Jordan, Jesus was interrupted by a urgent request for help from Mary and Martha about the illness of Lazarus.

John 11:3-4 So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

- The sisters assumed that Jesus would go immediately and look into the situation.
- But for some reason Jesus stayed away for another two days.

John 11:5-6 Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

- From this point onward in the text, Jesus seems to be taking charge and controlling the narrative.
- His goal was to bring glory to God through his actions and his works.
 - Jesus directs the timing of the visit to two days to see Lazarus even among hostile situation (v. 8, 16)
 - Jesus uses the timing of the delay to see Lazarus so that the faith of the disciples would increase (v. 15)
 - When Jesus arrives, Jesus tells Martha, "Your brother will rise again." (v. 23)
 - Jesus claims that his is the resurrection and the life (v. 25)
 - Jesus weeps over the death of Lazarus (v. 35)
 - Jesus directs the stone from Lazarus' tomb to be removed (v. 39)
 - Jesus cries to Lazarus to come out (v. 43)
- All of these actions was to bring glory to God and to convince everyone that Jesus had been sent by God the Father.
- During times of despair, when we have reached our dead end, we must let Jesus take control of our situation so that God can ultimately be glorified.

- The boot camp training is over. Next week we will celebrate the journey for Palm Sunday.

***Hymn** Presbyterian Hymnal 142 "All Hail the Power"

All hail the power of Jesus' Name!

Let angels prostrate fall,

Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem,

And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,

Ye ransomed from the fall,

Ye ransomed from the fall,

Hail Him who saves you by His grace,

And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,

And crown Him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe,

On this terrestrial ball,

On this terrestrial ball,

To Him all majesty ascribe,

And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,

And crown Him Lord of all!

O that with yonder sacred throng

We at His feet may fall,

We at His feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,
And crown Him Lord of all!

***Affirmation of Faith** (Apostle's Creed)

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Loving God, in this time of uncertainty, wake us to the reminder that we are not alone.

Even as we are asked to keep our distance from others, help us to find ways to reach out to those who need our support and to those whose support we need. We are grateful for the gift of technology that keeps us emotionally connected even as we remain physically separated.

We thank you and ask your blessing especially on our front-line caregivers. Sustain, strengthen and protect our nurses, doctors, and support staff. Bless them as they offer compassionate care and show selfless courage in the face of great risk to themselves and to their families.

Bless all who provide essential services in our communities. We pray for our grocery store clerks; for those who care for our children, our elderly and our homeless; for all our first responders; for all who keep our communal infrastructure going. We are grateful for their vocation to serve the common good, and we give you thanks.

Bless all whose incomes, livelihood and health are threatened and disrupted. Through the goodness of our hands, help us to share with one another what is needed by all. Grant us creativity of mind and generosity of heart to respond to the needs in front of us.

Bless all who are decision makers in business and government, in our cities and in our world. Grant them wisdom, skill and courage to prioritize people and compassion and safety. We ask for your discernment and your sustaining grace as they carry the heavy burden of the health and well-being of us all.

Each time we wash our hands and encounter one another, remind us that we are not in this alone; we are all in this together. And when we are tempted to ask, "God, where are YOU in this crisis?" remind us once again that you are

right here with us, in the midst of it, that you have promised, "I am with you always."

(Adapted from the prayer of Sister Betsy Goodwin, OSF)

And now, with confidence as children of God, let us pray:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory forever. Amen.

***Hymn** Presbyterian Hymnal 423

***Benediction**

The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace both now and evermore.