

Pentecost Sunday (5-23-2021)

"Mortal, can these bones live?"

What a great question for this first Sunday that we're gathered again. With that question God is giving voice to the exiles' question. The people of Israel were in exile. The temple had been destroyed. The city of Jerusalem had been destroyed. The people had been deported, exiled to Babylon. They didn't know whether they would ever come home. They had seen widespread death, many, many of their people killed. And as God expresses their feeling, they are saying, Our bones are dried up and our hope is lost. We are cut off completely. Will we ever go home again? Can we ever live as a people again? Will we ever worship in a temple again? God's promise to the exiles was that yes, there will be new life. You will gather again. You will return home to a new beginning filled with God's spirit. "I will breathe life into them."

Well, friends, we have been in exile. Do you notice the hymn board? That was the last time that we met together in this space. The second Sunday in Lent a year ago. It's been fifteen months of isolation. Fifteen months of exile from the church building with community only at a distance. Fifteen months of living in fear for ourselves and for our loved ones. And I have heard during these times from many of you the questions, not in so many words but with the same kind of feeling. Can these bones live? Will we be able to gather again? Will anyone still be here? Will we be able to stay together as community, as church, even as we are apart? And what will life after the exile look like?

Well, I have good news for you, my friends. The God who breathed new life into dry bones is still with us. The Holy Spirit, the holy wind and fire of God is still moving among us. Promising new life. Gathering us together again. Bringing us home. It's a new beginning filled with God's spirit. When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Isn't that beautiful? It could hardly have been better texts for our first gathering together.

We don't know what the coming months will look like. We are going to be gathering as BAC and doing some reflection on where we want to head as church. This is a beautiful opportunity to reexamine. What have we learned from this last year? What have we

learned from our time apart? What do we want to do differently? What do we want to leave behind? What do we want to do that's new? Where is the Spirit leading us?

But I am so full of God's assurance and God's promise. The Spirit is among us, friends. God has not abandoned us. There are wonderful things in store for us in our future, new places that God is calling us. And we'll have a time of just figuring out how to be with people again. Some of us have lost the habit.

I want to leave you just with the words of our opening hymn, which is my prayer for us all today.

Send down the fire of your justice. Send down the rains of your love. Come send down the Spirit. Breathe life into your people. And we shall be people of God. Amen.