

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 5.23.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for **the Day of Pentecost**, Sunday, May 23, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (10 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Ezekiel 37:1-14 A prophecy of new life for God's people

¹The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in **the Spirit of the Lord** and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ²And he led me around among them, and **behold**, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴Then he said to me, "**Prophecy** over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵Thus says the Lord God to these bones: **Behold**, I will cause **breath** to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put **breath** in you, and you shall live, and **YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD.**" ⁷So I **prophesied** as I was commanded. And as I **prophesied**, there was a sound, and **behold**, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and **behold**, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin

had covered them. But there was no **breath** in them. ⁹Then he said to me, "**Prophecy** to **the breath; prophecy**, son of man, and say to **the breath**, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four **winds**, O **breath**, and **breathe** on these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰So I **prophesied** as he commanded me, and **the breath** came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. ¹¹Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. **Behold**, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' ¹²Therefore **prophecy**, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: **Behold**, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³And **YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD**, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴And I will put **my Spirit** within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then **YOU SHALL KNOW THAT I AM THE LORD**; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord."

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO EZEKIEL, CHAPTER 37

1. In Hebrew the same word (ruahk) is used for wind, breath, and spirit. What are some of the characteristics of wind, breath, and spirit? How does that help us understand what the Holy Spirit does and how he operates?
2. Prophecy has to do with proclaiming God's Word. It is both "forthtelling" what is real right now, and "foretelling" what is to be. Which kind of prophesying is there in this passage?
3. Who are the dry bones according to vs. 11? What promises are given to them?
4. What is meant by the phrase (vss. 6, 13, and 14) "You shall know that I am the Lord"?

2ND READING: Acts 2:1-21 The promise is kept: the Spirit is poured out

¹When the day of Pentecost arrived, {the apostles} were all together in one place. ²And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing **wind**, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³And divided **tongues** as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴And they were all filled with **the Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other **tongues** as **the Spirit** gave them utterance. ⁵Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own **language**. ⁷And

they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native **language**? ⁹Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians — we hear them telling in our own **tongues** the mighty works of God." ¹²And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out **my Spirit** on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream

dreams; ¹⁸even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out **my Spirit**, and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; ²⁰the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹And it shall come to pass that **everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**”

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO ACTS, CHAPTER 2:

- 1) As in the reading from Ezekiel, here we see that the Holy Spirit is given to empower us to prophesy, to tell the story of Jesus. The miracle here seems to be both the ability to speak in other languages, and the ability to hear in one’s own language. How do some in the crowd interpret this amazing scene (vs. 13)?
- 2) God’s gift to us of His Holy Spirit enables us to both believe and proclaim the good news of Jesus. How might you express that truth in a prayer of request and thanksgiving?
- 3) Read all of Acts, chapter two, to get the rest of the story of this amazing event that has come to be known as “the birthday of the church.”
- 4) (Vs. 21) Since we can’t do it on our own, who enables us to call upon the name of the Lord?

THE GOSPEL: John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15 Jesus goes away so that the Spirit might be given to us

²⁶Jesus said, “When **the Helper** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, **the Spirit of truth**, who proceeds from the Father, **he will bear witness about me.** ²⁷And you also will **bear witness**, because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{4b}“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, **the Helper** will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he

comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. ¹²I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When **the Spirit of truth** comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for **he will take what is mine and declare it to you.** ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that **he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**”

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO JOHN, CHAPTER 15:

1. The word translated as “helper” in vss. 26 and 7 is “paraclete,” a Greek term that literally means “one who is called alongside.” What does that communicate in terms of God’s proximity to us and the intimacy of the relationship?
2. It has been said that the Holy Spirit is not very original, that is, He declares to us only the words and promises of Jesus. What are those words and promises that He declares to us and how does He do it?
3. What does it mean in vss. 8-11 when it says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world (non-believers) of three things?