

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz
5th Sunday in Lent
March 18, 2018
Ezekiel 37:10-14



¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me. Breath entered them, and they came back to life. They stood on their feet, a very, very large army. ¹¹Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They are saying, ‘Our bones are dried up. Our hope is lost. We have been completely cut off.’ ¹²Therefore, prophesy and say to them that this is what the LORD God says. ‘I am going to open your graves and raise you up from your graves, O my people, and bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³Then you will know that I am the LORD when I open your graves and when I raise you up from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴I will put my Spirit in you, and you will come back to life. I will settle you on your own land, and you will know that I am the LORD. What I have spoken I will do, declares the LORD.’”

People of God-rescued from the flaming lake of fire in Hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

Today has been called Mission Mindset Sunday. Set your mind on missions! I read the other day about a young man named Andrew – just 20 years old. Andrew wanted to join a Fraternity down in Florida – so they had this “party” where they make the pledges do stuff that embarrasses them – so that the Fraternity brothers can make fun of them. What happened – *allegedly* – is

they made Andrew drink this whole bottle of bourbon all by himself in a very short amount of time. While people were having this party all around Andrew – drinking and listening to very loud music and having fun Andrew was slowly but surely dying from acute alcohol poisoning. By the time someone – anyone bothered to check – *allegedly* Andrew’s lips were blue – and his body was already cold and still. They couldn’t wake him up. They couldn’t find a pulse! Andrew was dead! How could that possibly happen – someone dies right in the middle of a party and nobody notices? I submit to you it’s easy – yes, it’s easy if you are not paying attention to the people around you. It’s easy if we are busy thinking about our self! Now sitting here in Church – it becomes much harder – because here – more than any place else – other than sitting around the dinner table when we are forced to think about family---Church is where we talk about and think about our “neighbor”! Jesus is very concerned that we be concerned about our “neighbor”! Our closest neighbors are of course – our family – our spouse – our children and grandchildren – the people who marry into our family! These people are our nearest neighbors! Today God’s Word says:

Only The Spirit Makes Us Alive!

I. We are dead in sin

II. The gospel gives us new life!

This morning we are going to talk about and think about a mission mind-set as we continue to prepare for friendship Sunday on Palm Sunday. Bring a friend to Church Sunday is next Sunday – the last Sunday in March – the last Sunday in Lent! Where did the 40 days go? Mission Mind-set is a conscious act. It is not the default setting in the human brain! We were having a meeting in the entry way the other day – talking about outreach

when a very nice person with a little child – stepped inside church and asked if they would use the washroom? We all said, “Sure! Come on in!” They used the washroom and were back out the door in a matter of minutes when it suddenly occurred – who was that person? Do you know? No...I thought you knew? No...maybe somebody should ask! So....out the front door. How are you? Good. How do you happen to be here at 7 p.m. on a Tuesday? Walking while a child is taking swimming lessons! Where do you go to Church? Their family had a church home. That’s good! Then you know Jesus died on the \dagger to wash away all your sins! Yes we do! That’s good! Please know you are always welcome here! God bless you! See you later!

This mission mind-set Sunday we are looking at the scroll of the Prophet Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a prophet – preacher and Rabbi of God’s Word. Ezekiel was also **a priest – the son of Buzi, by the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians. There the hand of the LORD was upon him.** Do you see the problem? A Priest – in Babylon? The ruins of the Temple were back in Jerusalem and Ezekiel is a 1,000 miles away in Babylon! Ezekiel could not bring sacrifices to his Heavenly Father. But he could preach and teach God’s Word to God’s people! In a very special way the LORD blessed Ezekiel – affording him a glimpse into Heavenly glory! He wrote, **“I looked, and I saw a windstorm coming out of the north – an immense cloud with flashing lightning and surrounded by brilliant light. The center of the fire looked like glowing metal, and in the fire was what looked like four living creatures.** These were not Precious Moment angels with pastel gowns with patches – Precious Moment angels with little tear drop eyes and little white wings and sandals on their small feet. **Each of them had four faces and four wings. The legs were**

straight; their feet were like those of a calf and gleamed like burnished bronze. Under their wings on their four sides they had the hands of a man. All four of them had faces and wings, and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved. Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. Their wings were spread out upward; each had two wings, one touching the wing of another creature on either side and two wings covering its body...By these creatures were wheels intersecting. Their rims were high and awesome and all four rims were full of eyes all around! By grace alone Ezekiel peeked into Heaven. When Ezekiel saw it – he fell face down...and I heard the voice of one speaking. He said to me, “Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.” As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard Him speaking to me.

The LORD called Ezekiel – **son of man** – literally some 63 times – *son of man*. This is the name Jesus used for Himself again and again and again – in lowliness and humility – taking upon Himself our flesh to redeem us! The LORD called Ezekiel to do inspired object lessons to teach the people. The LORD instructed Ezekiel, “**Now son of man, take a clay tablet, put it in front of you and draw the city of Jerusalem on it. Then lay siege to it: Erect siege works against it, build a ramp up to it, set up camps against it and put battering rams around it. Then take an iron pan, place it as an iron wall between you and the city and turn your face toward it. It will be under siege, and you shall besiege it. This will be a sign to the house of Israel.** The LORD told

Ezekiel – **“Strike your hands together and stamp your feet and cry out “Alas!” Because of all the wicked and detestable practices of the house of Israel for they will fall by the sword, famine and plague! And they will know that I am the LORD, when their people lie slain among their idols around their altars...Then they will know that I am the LORD.** Some 70 times Ezekiel wrote, **“They will know that I am the LORD!** My dad used to say again and again when I was growing up – you can learn the easy way or you can learn the hard way! The children of Israel seemed determined to learn the hard way!

Mission Mind-set. There are countless opportunities to share your faith – if we only think about it! Ezekiel – how do you talk about Ezekiel? If you grew up in the 70’s you are probably familiar with Styx – rock n’ roll – Styx in 1977 came out with a song, “Come, Sail Away” – inspired by – Ezekiel – and the creatures with the faces and the wheels with eyes sailing all around – *I thought that they were angels!* There you go! Mission Mind-set. The fact is – from time to time you can go to actual workshops where they give you a thick notebook full of pages of ideas for sharing your faith! One of the classic time-worn strategies when you are talking to someone – and they tell you someone has died – to ask the hypothetical question – if you died today – do you know where you would be? For sure? I know – if I died today I would be in Heaven – because Jesus died on the \dagger to wash away all my sins. I know for sure and for certain I will go to Heaven because God’s Word says I am saved by grace alone – through faith alone – found in Scripture alone – in Christ alone. And there you go! I will never forget a layman who used to always be looking to share his faith. What he did was go to a grocery store and get a grocery cart – and then crash his cart into

someone else's cart – I mean a pretty good crash. And then he would apologize profusely. And then he would say it's a good thing that was just a grocery cart. If that was a car accident – someone could have been killed! And then the classic question – if you died today do you know where you would be? For sure?

The picture in our text is simple as it is powerful. Dead dry old bones – people dead in trespasses and sins made alive by the power of the gospel. Helpless – hopeless bones. Ezekiel preached the Gospel and they became alive – they were alive by grace through faith! Ancient Israel would go back from Babylon to the Promised Land. Baby Jesus could be born in Bethlehem and would die on the \dagger just outside Jerusalem. Jesus would die to redeem us. The Holy Spirit alone can make the gospel we share to be powerful and sufficient and effective – making us alive by grace through faith alone. The results of our sharing the gospel belong to the Holy Spirit and not us!

The other day I was eating my breakfast – my instant cereal with all kinds of extra healthy grains – with some fresh banana slices – 1/2 a glass of reduced sugar OJ with some pulp and my cup of Highlander Grogg and across the screen it said this really brilliant guy had died at the age of 76. This guy was so smart – in the worldly sense he was often compared to Albert Einstein. This man wrote the book – literally A Brief History of Time. They say he understood better than anyone – the concepts of time and space – theoretical quantum physics and black holes! That's really smart! And yet it was reported his mom said when he was young he believed in Jesus – but eventually he became so smart – he *outgrew Jesus*?! Nobody is that smart! It reminds me of Charles Krauthammer – also a very brilliant man. I wrote to Mr. Krauthammer twice so far – telling him in very basic terms that

Jesus died for his sins and mine. So far Dr. Krauthammer hasn't written back. Maybe he will – maybe he won't. But it is certainly worth a try!

Mission Mind-set Sunday. For Christmas this year I got a calendar that says what each day is. Last Thursday was Shoe the World Day! How do you celebrate Shoe the World Day? Go bare foot out of sympathy for people who have no shoes. Who doesn't have shoes – you ask? Stop and think for a minute. Haitian orphans don't have shoes. People who live in the Amazon Rain Forest – going deeper and deeper in the jungle to keep away from people who are chopping down enormous hardwood trees that have grown undisturbed for literally hundreds of years! People in Nigeria and the people of Benin and Togo where they don't even have shirts! Who doesn't have shoes? Homeless people in New York and Chicago and Miami and San Francisco. Go without shoes? But it's cold outside and there are a thousand sharp and dangerous things that I could step on. There are puddles and ice and snow! We have shoes and boots – a walk in closet with a huge rack with two and three levels to hold all our different shoes and boots and flip-flops and slippers! This world needs shoes. It needs food for people who are literally malnourished – while they say we in America waste 35 million tons of food. How much is that? I have no idea. We waste about \$161 billion worth of food. How much is that? Again I have no idea. They say we Americans waste between 30 and 40% of our food. That's approaching ½! That's a lot of waste – and so? What's even more troubling – out of the 7 ½ billion people alive on our planet right now – only about 1 billion people believe in Jesus! That means 6 ½ billion people are not on their way to Heaven. What can you do about it? You can tell someone – anyone – *anyone* you meet that Jesus died

for them. Jesus is the only way to Heaven. Tell them and tell the now – because tomorrow just might be too late! God bless your mission-mindset for Jesus' sake. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony P. Schatz

