**A Brief Order for Zoom Worship**

**Gathering Lighting a Candle & Opening Prayer**

*Based on Psalm 130*

**Gathering Song**

**Opening the Word –** *Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches…*

1st Lesson Ezekiel 37:1-14 The Valley of the Dry Bones **Read by Luke**

**A reading from the book of Ezekiel.**

God grabbed me. God’s Spirit took me up and set me down in the middle of a wide valley strewn with bones. He led me around and among them—a lot of bones! There were bones all over the valley—dry bones, bleached by the sun.

God said to me, “Human One, can these bones live?”

I said, “Lord God, only you know that.”

God said to me, “Prophesy over these bones: ‘Dry bones, listen to the Message of God!’”

God told the dry bones, “Watch this: I’m bringing the breath of life to you and you’ll come to life. I’ll attach sinews to you, put meat on your bones, cover you with skin, and breathe life into you. You’ll come alive and you’ll realize that I am God!”

I prophesied just as I’d been commanded. As I prophesied, there was a sound and, oh, rustling! The bones moved and came together, bone to bone. I kept watching. Sinews formed, then muscles on the bones, then skin stretched over them. But they had no breath in them.

God said to me, “Prophesy to the breath. Prophesy, O Mortal. Tell the breath, ‘God, the Sovereign, says, Come from the four winds. Come, breath. Breathe on these slain bodies. Breathe life!’”

1So I prophesied, just as God commanded me. The breath entered them and they came alive! They stood up on their feet, a huge army.

11Then God said to me, “O Human Being, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Listen to what they’re saying: ‘Our bones are dried up, our hope is gone, there’s nothing left of us.’

“Therefore, prophesy. Tell them, ‘God, the Sovereign, says: I’ll dig up your graves and bring you out alive—O my people! Then I’ll take you straight to the land of Israel. When I dig up graves and bring you out as my people, you’ll realize that I am God. I’ll breathe my life into you and you’ll live. Then I’ll lead you straight back to your land and you’ll realize that I am God. I’ve said it and I’ll do it. God’s Decree.’”

*Hear what the bones and the Breath are saying to the churches.*

A poem by Jim Perkinson

**Sequence Hymn/Song**

Gospel John 11:32-53 **Read by Meg**

**Denise’s Reflection**

**5th Sunday in Lent**

**March 29, 2020**

**John 11:32-53**

Mary came to where Jesus was waiting and fell at his feet, saying, “Lord, if only you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

When Jesus saw her sobbing and the mourners with her sobbing, a deep anger welled up within him. He said, “Where did you put him?”

“Lord, come and see,” they said. Now Jesus wept.

The mourners said, “Look how deeply he loved him.”

Others among them said, “Well, if he loved him so much, why didn’t he do something to keep him from dying? After all, he opened the eyes of a blind man.”

Then Jesus, the anger again welling up within him, arrived at the tomb. It was a simple cave in the hillside with a slab of stone laid against it. Jesus said, “Remove the stone.”

The sister of the dead man, Martha, said, “Lord, by this time there’s a stench. He’s been dead four days!”

Jesus looked her in the eye. “Didn’t I tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?”

Then, to the others, “Go ahead, take away the stone.”

They removed the stone. Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, “Abba, I’m grateful that you have listened to me. I know you always do listen, but on account of this crowd standing here I’ve spoken so that they might believe that you sent me.”

Then he shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” And the dead man came out, wrapped from head to toe, and with a kerchief over his face.

Jesus told them, “Unwrap him and let him loose.”

That was a turnaround for many of the mourners who were with Mary. They saw what Jesus did, and believed in him. But some went back to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. The high priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Religious ruling body. “What do we do now?” they asked. “This man keeps on doing things, creating God-signs. If we let him go on, pretty soon everyone will be believing in him and the Romans will come and remove what little power and privilege we still have.”

Then one of them—it was Caiaphas, the designated Chief Priest that year—spoke up, “Don’t you know anything? Can’t you see that it’s to our advantage that one man dies for the people rather than the whole nation be destroyed?” He didn’t say this of his own accord, but as Chief Priest that year he unwittingly prophesied that Jesus was about to die sacrificially for the nation, and not only for the nation but so that all God’s exile-scattered children might be gathered together into one people.

From that day on, they plotted to kill him. So Jesus no longer went out in public among the religious authorities. He withdrew into the country bordering the desert to a town called Ephraim and secluded himself there with his disciples.

*Hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.*

**Reflection**

I haven’t said or written much since we have begun sheltering in place. I’m a little nervous to do so now. I am humbled by the pandemic. I am awed by it.

I believe that God is with us and that we are with each other – the profound truth that we are in this together.

There is a story about the Chinese Master, Lau-tzu and his disciples:

The disciples were absorbed in the teaching:

*Those who know do not say;*

*Those who say do not know.*

When the Master entered, they asked him what the words meant.

The Master asked them: “Which of you knows the fragrance of a rose?”

Of course, all of them knew.

Then he said, “Put it into words.”

All were silent.

I am grateful for the rawness of the gospel. A man has died. A brother. A friend. There’s mourning and crying. Jesus is late, put he does show up. The one who heals others couldn’t be there in time for his friend. He’s too late.

And it’s not like he rushed to get there. There’s a back story. Lazarus (who has died) along with his the sisters, Mary and Martha – were his good friends. They regularly helped and supported and sheltered Jesus. They were part of his trusted inner circle. Mary and Martha – had sent for Jesus when Lazarus fell gravely ill. But we’re told that Jesus lingered for days where he was sheltering-in-place, hiding out from the religious authorities who wanted Jesus dead. Finally he decides to risk going to Bethany to see his friend, but he’s too late. Lazarus has already died.

I’m grateful for the rawness.

And even Mary’s accusing question: where were you? You could have saved him.

I’m grateful that he doesn’t make excuses. He’s silent. He weeps. I’m grateful for his tears.

And for Martha recoiling from the stench of death – from her brother’s dead body. I’m grateful for Mary and Martha’s anger and impatience with Jesus. And for Jesus’ anger. And his second round of tears at the tomb. I’m grateful for the kerchief-covered face. And for the exposure of the betrayal of the ones who are plotting to keep their privilege and power, who are ready to make easy tradeoffs – one life for many.

I’m grateful for the rawness. Because honestly, I have been feeling pretty numb. And the rawness helps to break me open. I’m glad for all of the weeping in this text. I haven’t yet found my way to tears. How is that possible?

Maybe I’ve been caught up in denial and fear. I hear it in myself as I worry for the “most vulnerable” in a way that serves to distance myself from suffering ever actually touching me in my own body. I am vulnerable. We’re all vulnerable.

And I’ve been caught up in trying to keep myself and my family safe. And trying to do my part – our part – to keep others safe. All of which seem so small and pathetic. Especially when I think of people who need my help. Even as I know this is precisely the best thing most of us can do to take care of each other. Maybe I am too ashamed to weep. But that would be a mistake.

What if grief is our calling right now? Our vocation. Grief is how we can stay human in the face of all of the suffering that has been happening at a distance and is now here and washing over us in Detroit.

I heard about a meme that was circulating on FaceBook. Jesus is in his room, sheltering in place. Someone asks: “Where should I tell them you are?” Jesus replies: “Tell them I’m working in mysterious ways.”

But there actually *is* a mystery that he stakes is own life and death upon. I think some of the tears he cries are for himself. He knows that death is closing in on him and there is not much more time to be with his friends or his mother, or to be under the beauty of the sky, or out on the Lake, or around the table, to see or smell the lilies, or see the little sparrows or hear the dove hovering or to feel the Wind. Down to the bone he believes anyway: death does not and will not have the last word.

Maybe he’s weeping at the excruciating mystery of that.

I hope I come around to my deepest self and finally weep. I hope you do. I hope we mortals become more human. And that we come to know more deeply our place in the web of all life.

It’s hard to feel like we are doing nothing – especially if you are someone who thrives on the front lines. There’s plenty to do from the place where we are sheltering in place if you are longing for that. People have been busy advocating for the water to be turned back on. And to be turned back on safely. And now, not in 3 months from now. And then to be made affordable for the long haul. The work that we have done for years is having an effect. Thank goodness.

People are restoring other connections as well. Reaching out to family and friends with whom we’ve been out of touch for too long. And there will be neighbors and organizations that will need financial help – be generous. And water deliveries to be made – if you and others in your household are healthy and not among the vulnerable, you could help with that. There will be more opportunities.

But mostly we just need to stay put. And wait. And try to live as well as you can – with as much kindness and joy as you can - in your own household – whether that’s with family, or roommates or alone. And keep ourselves and others safe as best we are able. And let life keep insisting in us. Cindy Tobias reminds us that this *is* front-line work at this time.

But we can also open ourselves to the suffering and weep when we feel like weeping. Be angry at the ineptitude that could have prevented some of it.

Be awed by the terrible mystery of it and our own vulnerability.

Call on the accompaniment and wisdom of the ancestors – they are helping us.

Weep and rage and rest in God. Amen.

**Offertory Song**

*We could give our offerings through the donate button on our website at* [*https://stpetersdetroit.com/*](https://stpetersdetroit.com/)*Try it after we end our time together.*

**Intercessions** *– Denise will open this time to share our prayers.*

*Share your prayers as you feel moved. Unmute your mic before you speak!*

**Closing Prayer** *from the New Zealand Prayer Book*

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,**

**Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all,**

**Loving God, in whom is heaven;**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!**

**The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!**

**Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!**

**You commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope**

**and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.**

**In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.**

**In the times of temptation and test, strengthen us.**

**Form trials too great to endure, spare us.**

**From the grip of all that is evil, free us.**

**For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,**

**Now and forever. Amen.**

**Blessing** *These are Bishop Bonnie’s good words.*

Dear friends, life is short and we do not have much time

to gladden the hearts of those who travel the way with us.

So be swift to love and make haste to be kind.

And may the blessing of Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit

be with you this day and remain with you always.  Amen.

**Announcements**

**Closing Song      You can move (even dance) and sing along!**

**Sending**

*The Peace of God is always with us. Thanks be to God!*

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**Join us for Zoom coffee/tea hour for some informal check-in and conversation**

Here's a link to Bishop Bonnie's sermon for the day.

<https://www.edomi.org/sermon>