**First Reading Ezekiel 37: 1-14**

*The Hebrew word rendered as ruach means “spirit,” “wind,” or “breath.” This reading plays on the different meanings of the word. Just as the dry bones in Ezekiel’s vision are given new life, flesh, and breath (or spirit), so God will give the exiles God’s own spirit and will bring them home to the land of Israel.*

1The 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. 2He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” 4Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 I will lay sinews on 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.” 7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8 I looked, and 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, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” 10I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. 11Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ 12Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”

**Psalm 104: 1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34**

Bless the Lord, my soul; O Lord, my God, you are great indeed! How manifold are your works, O Lord! The earth is full of your creatures. 2. You take away their breath, they die, and they return to their dust. When you send forth your Spirit of life, they are created in your sight. 3.

May God’s glory last for all time; may the Lord be glad in God’s works. Pleasing to God will be my theme, I will be glad in the Lord!

**Second Reading Acts 2: 1-21**

*Originally Pentecost was a Jewish thanksgiving-type festival celebrated seven weeks after Passover. On this particular Pentecost, however, the Holy Spirit is poured out upon the entire community of believers just as Jesus had promised and the scriptures had prophesied. Empowered by the Spirit, the entire community bears witness to God’s activity in multiple languages.*

1When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. 5Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. 7Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9 Parthians, Medes, 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, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” 13But others sneered and said, “They are filled with new wine.” 14But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon 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 upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. 19And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. 20The sun shall be

turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day. 21Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

**Gospel John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15**

*While speaking to his disciples before his death, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Helper” and describes the difference the Spirit will make in their lives and in the world.*

[Jesus said,] 26“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning. 16:4b“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; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. 7Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 about sin, because they do not believe in me; 10about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned12“I 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, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

**SERMON**

I’d like to focus on the Acts reading for today. It is probably the reading most commonly identified with this festival of Pentecost that we celebrate. It so happens to mention the festival of Pentecost, which was originally a Jewish harvest festival celebrated 50 days after Passover. Due to what happens in this story, however, we have now associated the festival of Pentecost with the sending of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church. It’s also a rather dramatic and exciting story. That’s not why we’re going to focus on it today, but it does add interest.

One of the things about this story that has always confused me is the rush of the violent wind and the tongues of fire. We have certainly run with the imagery of fire representing the Holy Spirit. There are often flames depicted on Pentecost paraments or vestments. Some of my braver colleagues have actually created fires in the worship space…safe fires, of course! I’ve had the kids wave ribbons of red, orange, and yellow to represent fire. So, we’re all in on the fire image. But what were those tongues of fire and the violent wind all about in the first place?

In the very beginning, in the creation story of Genesis 1, v. 2 says that “a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.” We are to understand that wind from God as one of God’s forces in creation. When we hear in Acts 2, “And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting,” we are led to wonder what the wind from God is planning to create at this point.

Next, recall the story of God calling Moses to lead God’s people out of slavery into the Promised Land. How did God appear to Moses? It was through a burning bush, a bush that was engulfed in flames but did not burn. Not only did God speak to Moses from the bush but God told Moses as he walked on the ground near the bush to take off his sandals because he was walking on holy ground. God’s holy presence was there in that burning bush. There is the connection between the presence of God and fire.

Violent wind and fire in the Old Testament revealed the presence of God in particular moments. With those images appearing again here in this passage from Acts 2, the writer points us to this moment as a moment when God would be present in a new way. And that is most certainly what happens. God was present in a new way through the person of Christ. And now, post-Ascension, God was going to be present in yet another way. And this way may be the most unbelievable of all; the holy presence of God would dwell within human beings.

Let’s stop on that for a moment. I would like us to notice God’s movement toward humanity. From the burning bush where God was willing to be present in a bush, talking to a human being but the man could not get too close without taking off his sandals. To taking the form of a human being and taking residence in human life with humanity. Now, through the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, God can dwell “within” human beings. That is a huge, crazy deal! God, through the Holy Spirit, came to live in us! Us, who are nothing special.

Us, who are actually quite sinful and broken. After all of the effort throughout history that religion put into weeding out who was worthy to even be in God’s presence and who was not, now God was going to dwell inside us!

That was such an unbelievable thing to happen in those days. And to be quite honest, how often do we truly take a moment to realize what it means to us that God, through the Holy Spirit, chooses to dwell within us? When you were baptized you were sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever. That Holy Spirit…that is God’s presence, in YOU! Maybe we are comforted by that thought, and certainly there is a dimension to God’s relationship with us that is comforting. But there is another dimension…the dimension that should give us pause and maybe even terrify us a little.

Notice what happens to the disciples AFTER the presence of God enters them. They are given the ability to speak in various languages, so that the Jews who had come from other areas to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival were able to hear at least one disciple speaking their language. It was actually a bit of a crazy scene, so crazy, in fact, that people thought the disciples were drunk. Let that sink in for a moment…not the drunk part, but the part in which the Holy Spirit involved these disciples in God’s plans that defied what was normal, what was expected, what could be reasonably explained. The only way to explain it, which Peter did, was to attribute it to the presence of God dwelling within them doing God’s work.

This surprising nature of the work of the Holy Spirit continues to be revealed throughout Acts. We talked about this in Confirmation class two weeks ago…Acts is an account of how expansive God’s love is. In Acts 2, the Spirit enables the disciples to speak the good news in all of these different languages. Later in Acts, the Spirit enables Peter to heal a man who couldn’t walk and then later the Spirit carries Philip to an Ethiopian eunuch, whom he baptizes and then later the Spirit transforms the heart of Saul, a persecutor and murder into Saul, better known as Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ and then later the Spirit comes upon a Gentile soldier named Cornelius, whom Peter baptizes along with Cornelius’ whole household.

What matters now, however, is what surprising, unexplainable work is the Holy Spirit drawing us into today? This is the part of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us that may make us nervous or unsettled. We really do not know what God is up to until the Holy Spirit gives us a hint. But what we do know is that it is in line with the ministry that Jesus started that he

entrusted us to carry on in his name. That work is about making the circle bigger, welcoming all kinds of people, possibly making people in our community think we’re a little crazy, helping people who have long felt distant from God to be reconciled in relationship.

In addition to participating in the mission that Christ has given us, we are meant to learn something from the Holy Spirit, be transformed by the Holy Spirit. In fact, our participation in the mission of Christ will be a learning, transformational experience. The Holy Spirit will show us that there isn’t any person that God has created that is exempt from experiencing the indwelling of God’s presence. The Holy Spirit has come, the presence of God is within us, and it is all out of our control but functions according to the expansive grace and love of God. Amen.