

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

March 26, 2023

Old Testament Reading; Ezekiel 37: 1-14

Responsive Reading; Psalm 130

Epistle Reading; Romans 8: 6-11

Gospel Reading; John 11: 1-45

Sermon Title: Jesus Wept

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; God feels our pain even when He is going to take it from us. With God, all is possible, “so it is written, so it shall be done.”

And He said to me,” Son of man, can these bones live?” So, I answered, “O God, You know.”

Now Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give You.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. AND

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Hallelujah and Amen!

Just kidding. That is not the end of my sermon. You are not getting off that easy.

These excerpts of our four scripture lessons for today lend themselves into what could literally be hundreds of sermons. That said I am going to briefly recap these miracles in order to bring out what I consider to be the most astounding sign that most readers never even pick up on.

I absolutely love the lesson from Ezekiel, I mean that was the source of the that upbeat hymn, “them bones, them bones, them dry bones.” Ezekiel is taken by God to a valley filled with bones, old, cracked, and dry. Zek lived in a time of turmoil and the feeling that their country was morally lost beyond saving.

Kind of like the world we live in now.

God asks Zek if these bones could live again and then God works His miracle but notice He requires Zek to be part of the cure. God does not just put the bones back together, He requires Zek to prophecy to the bones and later to the breath.

The verbal picture of the noise and sight of this valley full of bones coming together and becoming a huge living army of

healthy soldiers for God is so awesome that special effect movie makers are eating their hearts out to try to top it ever since.

A lot of work for a movie producer but God just speaks and it is so.

God then goes on to have Zek prophecy to his people that God would make this happen in a metaphorical way that the graves would open and the people would rise up to a real life in their own land where they would no longer feel dead.

Our Psalm reiterates the feeling of calling out in a despair similar to that felt by Israel in Zek's time.

Paul in Romans turns our understanding of life's priorities on its head when he proposes that if you allow the Spirit of God to enter you and control you, you will not only be spiritually alive but, "He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

WOW! This is where the atheists say we just waived bye, bye to our brains but we know that if we have faith in the hope supplied by God, we have eternal life which we feel now and trust in the future.

Now we come to the lengthy gospel lesson which greatly increases our understanding of Jesus, His disciples, His friends and His mission.

To make a long story shorter Jesus allows Lazarus to die, “but for the glory of God that the Son of God may be glorified through it,”

Laz has been dead for four days. No chance that he could have been in a coma or the likes. He is in a tomb and there would be a stench. Laz is dead, no ifs, ands, or buts. Lazarus is dead. Period!

Jesus says, “Lazarus, come forth!” And with just a word, out walks Laz, all bound up in funeral attire. The reading ends with, “Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.”

This belief was so strong that the religious leaders plotted to kill Lazarus because he was walking, talking proof that they were wrong.

Now comes my bomb shell.

Comparatively speaking, it is no big deal that Jesus rose Lazarus from the dead. It would be no big deal for God to raise an army from a bunch of dry bones. Actually, it is no big deal that God could create the world, the universe and everything in them. God is God and He can do anything. For God to do these things is kind of like an outdoorsman setting up a hunting camp with a tent, a fire and a line to bleed out his deer before he butchered them. The big deal is disclosed in verse 35, i.e. “Jesus

wept.” The big deal is that an all-powerful God could love us enough to do these things for us.

Jesus showed His love for us in Matthew 23: 37 when He looked over the Temple city and said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.”

The big deal is that God loves us enough to do all these things for us. He even sent His Son to die for us “while we were still sinners.” We weren’t and still aren’t all that good and God loves us this much. Not only does God love us. God trusts us. Like Ezekiel we are asked and trusted to be the hands, feet and voices for God. If God weeps when we hurt just think of the joy He must feel when we try to be more like Him.

Let’s make God smile. Hallelujah and Amen! There, that one is for real.