

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

May 23, 2021

Old Testament Reading; Ezekiel 37: 1-14

Responsive Reading; Psalm 104: 24-35

Epistle Reading; Acts 2:1-12

Gospel Reading; John 15: 26-27 & 16: 4-15 & 14: 12

Sermon Title: **PROPHECY, SON OF MAN**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Prophets professed God but on Pentecost, that duty was passed onto us. Are we worthy? God thinks so! Today the Christian Church is born.

Hello church. Here we are on Pentecost Sunday. Those of you that know me well know that I usually go a little crazy on Pentecost Sunday. The reason for this is simple. To me, this may well be the most important day in the life of the institution we call the Christian Church. Today we celebrate the day that God said, "OK, I'm turning it over to you. The ball is in your court now. Play it like I taught you to. No, I'm not kidding. I trust you. Get to it and save the world, one deed and one word at a time. Get-r-done!"

My apologies to the Cable Guy.

To see where I am coming from let's look at the scriptures.

I love the dry bones theme found in Ezekiel. In this message Ezekiel is transported by God to a valley full of dry bones. These bones represent the chosen people who have fallen on hard times and have given up all hope. God asks Ezekiel if these bones can live, to which Ezekiel responds that basically only God could know that. God instructs Ezekiel to "prophesy" to the bones and to "prophesy" to the wind. In our translation it says, "Prophesy, son of man", while in the Standard Revised Version it says, "Prophesy, mortal". I kind of like that use of the word Mortal as opposed to Son of Man because we associate Son of Man with Jesus and this confuses the situation for a lot of us. Any who. God is asking a mortal to do the act instead of having the mortal just watch as God does it Himself like when He first breathed life into Adam.

Voila! Success! The bones come to life proving that with God anything is possible. Hidden in this event is the fact that God used Ezekiel to commit the actions that resulted in the miracle.

We now go to our Epistle lesson from Acts. This is the familiar story of how the Holy Spirit came like tongues of fire and landed on all the believers in the upper room and in the streets below. Immediately all of these people became able to speak in other languages so that everyone around could understand

what they were saying. I bet you did not think that taking French class in school was a miracle. Well, actually, speaking another language is not a miracle as much as what you say can be a miracle if that will make a difference in someone's life. Notice that people heard the Galileans speaking of, "the wonderful works of God", in their own language.

"Prophecy, Son of Man" can't do much good if the one you are talking to can't understand a word you are saying. Luckily for us we do not have to know another language if we are talking to those that speak the same one that we do.

So, why is this so big a deal?

The "big deal" is explained in the Gospel reading.

Christ has been physically walking among the people in the Galilee area, and He has been teaching and performing miracles. The disciples are not as concerned about where Jesus is going as much as they are sorrowful that He will no longer be physically with them. They do not see themselves as adequate to take over His ministry. Jesus says, "Nevertheless 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 depart, I will send Him to you."

Earlier in chapter 14 of John, Jesus says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do

also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.”

Wait a second! Hold on! What did He just say? “The works that I do he [or we] will do also and greater works than these he [we] will do because I go to the Father.”

No! This can't be. Jesus is in a whole different league than I am. He is God and I'm not. How can He say I can do the deeds that He has done and greater deeds also? That does not make sense. I think He has got the wrong man. I kind of sound like Moses when he was talking to the burning bush and thought God had made a mistake when He picked Moses to rescue the Hebrews out of Egypt.

We ain't it God. You got the wrong bunch.

But God says we can. You can't out pizza the hut and you can't outsmart God. This is the plan that God had from the beginning. God wants us to be the body of Christ. Jesus is the head and the head makes the decisions but the body carries out the work. The brain tells the feet to walk but the feet have to do the walking. Jesus tells us what to do but in God's plan we are expected to do it.

Think about it. There are 2.4 billion Christians in the world and if every one of them did a couple things for God then God could

accomplish more than if God went solo using just a Moses or an Elijah or an Ezekiel or a John the Baptist or even Jesus.

That scares me to say that. How can God believe in me or in you enough to entrust everything and everyone He created to the likes of us?

The fact of the matter is that is exactly what God has done.

On that Pentecost some 2000 years ago God handed over the baton to us when He gave birth to the Christian Church. Oh, we are not alone. God has promised to be with us always even to the end of the age. We are now the body of Christ. We are no longer just spectators in the stadium. We are now players. We are now on the team.

Where would you rather be than right here, right now? I know you are scared but you are not allowed to answer, "ANYWHERE"

You are here, like it or not. Happy Birthday Body of Christ.

Hallelujah and Amen!