

I will put My Spirit in you

Being a Christian is often dull, or worse, a drudgery. In our personal lives we can experience tragedy, grief, and set-backs. Our personal spiritual life often languishes because of hopelessly busy or complex life-styles. In our congregation, we may at times feel worship is boring or lifeless. So what can we do to be renewed and invigorated? How may we find hope? Well, we ought not to look to ourselves. Pentecost proclaims that God has breathed His Spirit into us through the Word, giving us hope and new life.

The malady is that we tend to look for hope in places where God has not promised we will find it. We, like the Israelites who were at one time prisoners in Babylon, look at our wretched situation and long for a better life. We long to be at home with the Lord - back in Jerusalem. Yet we often look to ourselves - our intellect, ingenuity, or our emotions - for a sense of vibrancy. We often look to congregational programs or quick-fix strategies to lift us out of our despair. The Gospel may appear too weak to accomplish what we need. Yet these substitutes to which we often look will only disappoint us. Dead, dry, disconnected bones, like Ezekiel once saw (Ezekiel 37), would have a better chance to come together, grow flesh, and come to life!

It is to God's Word that we must look for life and hope. As Ezekiel did and said only what he was commanded to say, so must we. The Word is able to accomplish the miracle of giving life to dead, dry bones. Why? Here are three reasons:

1. *It is the Word of God:* It is God's powerful Word, giving life and hope. God does not leave us to fend for ourselves, or devise our own strategies. He supplies us with his Word which brings into being something from nothing. As at creation when He spoke and it was, so now He speaks to us and we who were dead in sin are made alive.
2. *It is the Word of the Spirit:* The Word of the Gospel is the source of the Spirit for us, the life-giving Spirit who energises and encourages us. We have, all of us, received this gift through our baptism, through which God has put His Spirit in us.
3. *It is the Word of the resurrection:* It is the Word about Christ, who was put to death for our sins and raised to life so that we might have new life. It is the purpose of the Spirit to bring Christ to us. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, heard and received through the means of grace, breathes new life

into us and gives us hope. But now He is risen! Because of what He has done for us, we have new life now - forgiveness, renewed spirits, and joy - and the promise of resurrection!

The meaning and significance of Easter is clarified at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Spirit, who bestows new life, resurrection, and hope. The Spirit, the breath of God, is in us through the Word. That means that our lives are no longer characterised by lifelessness or despair - the old way of life has passed away and died. Behold, the new has come! We are baptised - we have life, we have hope. God has spoken the Word, and in the saying of it He has done it: "I will put my Spirit in you," (Ezek. 37:14).

Breathe on me, Breath of God,

Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Hymn 129, v.1