

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Take a Breather

March 29, 2020

Long before Jesus' death and resurrection, God made clear to His people that death would not have the last word. As Ezekiel was inspired to write of the dry bones of death having life breathed into them, it would foreshadow the future for God's people through the One who conquered death and grave once for all. In a world of death and decay, we are sustained in our journey now until the resurrection of all flesh through Jesus Christ, our life-giving Lord and Savior.

“Christ the Life of All the Living” [LSB 430]

1 Christ, the Life of all the living, Christ, the death of death, our foe,  
Who, Thyself for me once giving, To the darkest depths of woe:  
Through thy sufferings, death, and merit, I eternal life inherit.  
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

2 Thou, ah! Thou, hast taken on Thee, Bonds and stripes, a cruel rod;  
Pain and scorn were heaped upon Thee, O Thou sinless Son of God!  
Thus didst Thou my soul deliver, From the bonds of sin forever.  
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

3 Thou hast borne the smiting only, That my wounds might all be whole;  
Thou hast suffered, sad and lonely, Rest to give my weary soul;  
Yea, the curse of God enduring, Blessing unto me securing.  
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

4 Heartless scoffers did surround Thee, Treating Thee with shameful scorn  
And with piercing thorns they crowned Thee. All disgrace Thou, Lord, hast borne,  
That as Thine Thou mightest own me, And with heav'nly glory crown me.  
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

5 Thou hast suffered men to bruise Thee, That from pain I might be free;  
Falsely did Thy foes accuse Thee: Thence I gain security;  
Comfortless Thy soul did languish, Me to comfort in my anguish.  
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

6 Thou hast suffered great affliction, And hast borne it patiently,  
Even death by crucifixion, Fully to atone for me;  
Thou didst choose to be tormented, That my doom should be prevented.  
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be, Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.

7 Then, for all that wrought my pardon, For Thy sorrows deep and sore,  
For Thine anguish in the Garden, I will thank Thee evermore,  
Thank Thee for Thy groaning, sighing, For Thy bleeding and Thy dying,  
For that last triumphant cry, And shall praise Thee, Lord, on high.

## Prayer

Almighty God, in whom is life now and forever, through Your Son's suffering and death You have given us victory over all we ever need fear in sin, eternal death, and the power of the devil. Breathe into our bones and our souls Your life-giving Word, that we rejoice in Your forgiveness and serve You and others in love and faithfulness; in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Ezekiel 37:1–14

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> And I will lay sinews upon 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." <sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup> And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." <sup>10</sup> So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. <sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.' <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD."

We have to breath to live. We breath without thinking about it. However, someone who has asthma or emphysema, knows what it feels like to not be able to breath well or have being able to breath threatened. This exchange between Ezekiel and the Lord is an important one. It centers not on physical breathing but on spiritual breathing based on God's Word and the Holy Spirit.

Our spiritual breathing is hindered by our sin. St. Paul provides us with quite a list in Galatians chapter five. "19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." The vitality of our faith is dried out by such things as Paul mentions like the dry bones that have no life in them. This is when God speaks His Word so we see our sin, our not breathing well, our dry bones. "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20) Through the same Word we see our Savior. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) The Word of God accompanied with His Spirit gives life, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. God's Words to Ezekiel say it

clearly. “I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live.” The Word and the Spirit gives us the ability to have strong spiritual breath.

Jesus’ death on the cross paid for our sins that were choking the life out of us. His resurrection from the dead proved His victory over sin, death, and Satan’s power. Now we breath easier. Through His resurrection we have new life. “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” (Romans 8:11) David’s confidence is ours. “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.” (Psalm 23:6)

### **Lord’s Prayer**

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,  
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;  
give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.      *Numbers 6:24–26*