In our Old testament lesson to Ezekiel, God declares that these bones in the valley are the “whole house of Israel.” The whole house of Israel is God's Old Testament church. They are believers, or at least they are supposedly believers. Unfortunately, faith had fled from them, they felt like they were dried up and cut off.

**How To Overcome The World**

**1 John 5:4-10**

Quasimodogeniti – Easter II

04.11.2021

God commands Ezekiel to “prophesy over these bones.” That is, Ezekiel is to speak what God commands him to say. In the course of His speaking what God commands him to say, He is to declare, “thus says the Lord God.”

Yes, Ezekiel is to speak God's word to the people, they will again come to life. There is incredibly beautiful imagery that takes place in this text. This text has even inspired fun songs. It is too bad that fun songs focus on the wrong thing. I suppose it is cool that the bones come together, that muscles, and flesh come on the bones. It is really cool that Ezekiel prophesies to the breath and they come to life again. But the song gets it wrong! And many are those who have read this text and miss it as well! Yes, God's word breathes life into them again.

What kind of life is that? (Remember this question.)

Now I want you to think about the Creed. You know the last line/passage in the second article (whether the Apostles’ or Nicene) which states that Jesus is going to return to judge “the quick and the dead”, or “the living the dead.”

Who are the living? You automatically assume that "the living", or "the quick" are those who are walking around on Earth right now. While you think of the dead as those who are buried, who are gone to their eternal reward.

Examining the Scriptures we find many dying in the Old Testament “go to ***SLEEP*** with their fathers.” Jairus’ daughter had died, it was plainly apparent to those with physical eyes to see, but Jesus says she is ***sleeping****.* Paul talks in numerous places about those who have departed this veil of tears as being asleep.

Add to this what Jesus declared to the repentant sinner on the cross next to Him, that those who die as believers are with Christ in Paradise. Are those who sleep alive? Or are they dead?

On the other hand, there a number of places in Scripture which talk about those who are dead as those who have no faith. Jesus tells the one who wants to go back to bury his father before coming to follow him, “Let the dead bury their own dead.” Does He mean that those whose physical bodies have ceased breathing are to carry to the tomb those who have ceased breathing? Or is Jesus instructing that those who have no faith, who are dead, should bury those who have no faith?

Are the dead then, those who have eternal death? Are they those who are without faith in God? In other words, those who are damned.

Thinking of this when we confess the Creed, should we consider that speaking of Christ judging the living and the dead, it may be talking about those who have faith (the living) and unbelievers (the dead)?

Now remember the question I asked about that reading from Ezekiel, "what kind of life is there in that text?" Since the Lord God said that the dry bones where the whole house of Israel, are they physically dead bones? Or, are they dead bones because of the simple fact that they were without faith? And how is faith going to come into these dry, dead, bones? Ezekiel speaks God's word to them and they live!

The Israelites had tunnel vision. They were stuck with their eyes glued upon the things of this world. When things did not go the way they wanted them to be going, they complained. And when God called them to repentance, when His holy prophets spoke His Word faithfully, they rebelled and listened instead to the false prophets.

When God gave them over to their passions, letting them wallow in their false beliefs, letting the things of the world in which they trusted try to provide comfort, the inevitable happened. When it did – when things did not go well, what did they do? They grumbled against God! They trusted the world, the world didn’t come through, so they blamed God that things were not like they desired? Umm, I hope you see the problem.

Things are not any different today. It is interesting to watch who the most popular pastors and preachers are, the ones to whom the people clamor. Yes, those who are gladly teaching what itching ears want to hear. People hear the “worldly preachers” and some then love to tell their own pastors – especially the ones like Ezekiel, the ones being faithful: “Why can’t you just be like them, pastor? Why are you so ‘conservative,’ pastor? Can’t you be more like those other pastors, they are Christians too. Some of them are even Lutherans?”

Like I said, it is not much different today than in the days of the prophets. Israel loved to listen to those who claimed to speak God’s word to them, but who were simply telling them what their itching ears wanted to hear.

Yes, the world calls out to us daily. “Believe science or believe Jesus!” In some cases, that is the choice. God often does things that defy science – they are called miracles.

Water to blood…water to wine.

Israel walks through on dry land, water standing up on both sides of them.

Jonah in the belly of the fish and vomited up on dry land on the third day – alive. Jesus comes forth from the tomb on the third day – alive.

Elijah prays and returns the young boy to his mother – alive.

A virgin gets pregnant.

Jesus raises form death – the son of the widow from Nain, Jairus’ daughter, Lazarus...

Jesus heals the leper, makes the mute to speak, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk…

Jesus walks on water.

The One who creates all things, allows the creatures to crucify Him…

 …He rises three days later!

Todd Jerabek trusts that God gave His Son to die for Him, and rose to grant him resurrection and life eternal.

Where was the science in any of those things? Yeah, nowhere! All are incredible miracles. Miracle of God defy that which we have called the Laws of Nature…the Laws which the Creator imbued into His creation to keep order.

But how can I move beyond what I see with my eyes?

How can I trust what seems impossible?

Why should I expect things to be different than what I have heard, seen, smelled, tasted, and touched in the past?

Because, He is risen!

Either you are born of God and overcome the world, or you are stuck in it! Unfortunately, every day the world conditions you, teaches you, informs, and instructs you what to fear, love, and trust. Hey, don’t feel bad, the majority of people have followed that god/religion – and they will never, ever have to experience another winter (if you know what I mean).

True believers in Christ are different, the overcome the world.

*For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

You know what, the world is tempting. The siren voices of the world beckon seductively. Maybe you remember the sirens, those dangerous creatures (in Greek mythology) with beautiful voices and female bodies who lured nearby sailors with their enchanting music and singing to shipwreck on the rocky coast of their island? The Greek hero Odysseus escapes the danger of the Sirens’ song by stopping the ears of his crew with wax and having himself tied to the mast.

The siren voices of the world beckon to us daily. It is easy to fall prey to them, to go along with them – some to possible shipwreck. No one has the strength to do differently – no man, of his own flesh – can walk by faith and not by sight.

Who is it that overcomes the world? Those with faith in Christ! Christ came by water and the blood! When the soldier pierced His side, water and blood poured out. Water – Baptism! Blood – The Lord’s Supper! Adam’s bride was taken from His side when He had fallen into a deep sleep! That was God’s pointing forward in prophecy pointing to the event on the Cross. Christ fell into the deep sleep of death, His side was pierced, and from His riven side flows that by which God makes His bride, The Church – blood and water – Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

As our text says: *This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.*

Through these gifts the Holy Spirit is building faith. *For there are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree.*

The Word of Christ, inspired in the Scriptures and inspired to be spoken from the lips of faithful pastors, also delivers the Holy Spirit – as Christ has promised that those who hear His ministers, hear Him.

Christ overcame the world, for the world threw the worst it had to offer at Him. It crucified Him, spat upon Him, mocked Him, jeered Him, shamed its Creator, and He died by its hands! But three days later He rose!!!

God the Son gave His life so that those enamored with the world might be freed from its clutches for all eternity – as the forgiven and redeemed of God.

*If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning His Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in Himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.*

Yes, the suffering and death were the testimony of blood that was shed upon the cross. We know the story that Christ rose from the dead on Easter morning. But, we ask, what good does what happened to Christ some two thousand years ago do me today? You’d like some testimony – some witnesses today.

Those same three spoken of in our text are still testifying today. In fact, they are your own personal witnesses.

Water testifies to you. You are baptized into Christ. In daily contrition and repentance, you are drowned and die to sin and rise to new life. It is the Spirit alive in you which sustains you in the true faith. As our text declares that those who believe, do so because they are born of God – by water and the Spirit.

Blood is a further witness to you. As you partake of the true body and the true blood of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, it is a visible witness to you that your sins are forgiven. It is God’s seal of love for you and in you. It is food which strengthen faith in Christ.

Dear friends in Christ your faith clings to Christ, Christ is your victory, and in Him you overcome the world – today and into eternity. Amen. He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Amen!