

And what about neighbours, friends and family? Those closest to us can be the most intimidating to approach on matters of faith, can't they? Even Jesus commented that a prophet is only without honour among his own people. And yet can any of us, who have received the riches of faith in Christ, really turn a blind eye when those we most love are struggling through life without Jesus?

We have received so much from Him, haven't we? We have life itself, here and now; hope for the future as we anticipate the great and glorious day on which Jesus invites us into His nearer Presence; we have the peace that passes understanding; we have joy; and we have a world perspective that is radically different from those who do not know the Lord. These are *treasures!* And we have so many of them, all given to us freely out of the abundant grace and love that God shows us through Jesus. Freely we have received these treasures: freely we must share them.

The dry bones in Ezekiel's vision only came together as living bodies when Ezekiel obeyed God's command to prophesy to them. In small ways or great, I believe each of us has something of value to offer in our service to the Lord.

Pray about it. Ask the Lord how you might be an instrument of healing in another person's life. And when you see Jesus working through you, give Him the glory!

Χάρις τῷ θεῷ, εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Ἀμήν

---

Lections: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

LENT 5a

2014-04-06

PARISH OF GEORGINA—S. JAMES' SUTTON

Each one of today's readings deals with the subject of healing. In the book of the Prophet Ezekiel, we read of a valley filled with dry bones, responding to the Word of the Lord, and being knit together with flesh and sinew to become the living nation of Israel.

The Psalm speaks about forgiveness, which is a unique and—dare I say?—common form of healing.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans speaks about the resurrection of Jesus, with the promise that God who brought Jesus back from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit that dwells in you.

And in John, we have the raising of Lazarus from the dead, together with one of the very most important I AM statements of Jesus: *I AM the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.* [11:25-26]

*What do you make of all this?*

First, that God is all about life. He is the source of all life, the Creator of life, the ruler of life, the arbiter of life, the restorer of life. Second, that death is the enemy of God. Why wouldn't it be? If God gives life, then death is the opposite of what He gives. Death destroys, whereas God creates and restores. Third, that Jesus Christ came to be among us in order to accomplish not His own will, but the will of the Father Who sent Him. In John 14, Jesus tells His disciples, *The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me...* [10-11] So Jesus, Whom we worship, is the earthly

embodiment of God the Father, doing all that the Father instructed Him, and achieving His purpose on earth. Sometimes that reality gets missed, and people stray off looking for God's will, when in fact it is before them all the time. If we have seen Jesus, then we have seen the Father Who sent Him.

During the years of His earthly ministry, Jesus did three things. Do you know what they are? S. Matthew tells us [9:35] that *Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity*. Preaching, teaching and healing: everything Jesus did during the time of His earthly ministry fit into one of these categories. It's what He did, and it's what He commissioned his followers to do. Luke's Gospel [9:1-2] states that Jesus *called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal*.

The believing Church has always taken the Gospel message seriously. Hospitals and healing centres appeared long before the science of medicine took over. These are part of the Christian legacy. They emerged from the desire of God's people to join in the ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ, because much of the import of the Gospel had to do with the healing of people's illnesses and the ending of their suffering. It's what Jesus did.

The Kingdom of God that Jesus preached is a spiritual environment in which all believe in God and none are separated from Him by sin or death. We'll be hearing more about this in the next two weeks as we consider everything Jesus did to accomplish our salvation. The Kingdom of God is the stuff of prophecy, and Jesus proclaims its arrival. Remember that Jesus came in fulfilment of all the prophecies, and that, one way or another, all the prophecies point to Him.

One reason for the successful spread of the Gospel in its earliest days had to do with what people experienced through Jesus. First of all, He taught them with authority, saying things that no one else had ever said before. Secondly, He exercised His compassion and love on those who were suffering. In today's Gospel, Jesus raised His close friend Lazarus from the dead, a miracle of life over death that was repeated several times. We could say that Jesus was no great friend to the undertakers, since He had the most vexing habit of spoiling people's funerals by raising them back to life again! These were no conjuring tricks. Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days before Jesus called him from the tomb.

We wouldn't be here today, if Jesus had not been raised from the dead Himself. *I AM the resurrection and the life*, He says. We find our life in Him. We regain our life in Him.

The good news is that Jesus Christ lives. He came to seek and save that which was lost. What we learn of Him in the Gospel remains true today, since *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever*. [Heb 13:8] He continues His ministry of teaching, preaching and healing through His church. And the church is you and me and everyone else who knows and loves the Lord Jesus. We can participate in sacramental healing, which we'll do in a few moments, and when we do, we can expect that Jesus Himself will minister to us according to His will. He always does!

But we—meaning *all* of us—can also offer other forms of healing in His Name. We can follow the example of Jesus by accepting those who are different from us. We can show hospitality to strangers, especially strangers who venture into our church. Let them know that they are welcome! Let them know, by your own actions, that you love Jesus by extending His love to them.