

DRY BONES
EZEKIEL 37: 1-6
AUGUST 25, 2013

Lately, people all around the world have been seeking answers to the troubling questions and issues of the day. What is, at least equally troubling, is that there are so many people have no concept of their part in the problems of the day.

For example, some friends of mine went to a well-known department store yesterday and witnessed two women in the grocery section standing there talking and they ate a whole bag of grapes. There are several things wrong with the world view of those two women.

A couple of years ago, I had launched my boat at a ramp over on the Suwanee River. When I returned to trailer it, there were two men sitting on the bluff, with a cooler of beer. They were heartily drinking it and advising people on the best ways to launch or trailer their boats. What a way to spend a day! What limited insight into one's sense of self-fulfillment!

On larger, more tragic issues of the day, the economies of most nations are in shambles. People are frightened, are scared about their financial futures. Unemployment is high and job security is uncertain.

We learn more and more of our government intruding into the lives of us private citizens, and have the gall to ask us to trust them.

The Arab Spring has turned into the Arab Disaster. There are documented reports of poison gas being used to kill innocent civilians and governments have no idea how to respond.

Here, in America, the rate of senseless shootings continues to escalate. We have read this week of the young Australian who was shot and killed by three teenagers in Oklahoma because they "were bored." The housing market is struggling. Billions of dollars continue to flow out of the United States because millions of Americans are seeking fun, relief, and meaning through drugs such as cocaine and heroin and meth. Narcotics have become a scourge.

Our students apply to college and many of them have to take remedial course because they can't function academically to grade. Then, when they do graduate from college, they are saddled with great debt, and unable to find jobs. I am pleased to report that Gilchrist County is one of the highest rated school districts in the State of Florida.

We drive down the roads and see trash mile after mile. We are afflicted by people who drive down the streets with their radios blaring, not caring if they are passing a funeral, a hospital, a school, or a nursing home. It's the same with those people who drive trucks and cars and motorcycles with those loud tailpipes.

There is a significant loss of common civility. There is a shocking lack of social identity and cohesiveness. Bumper stickers and t-shirts, which are demeaning, crude and coarse, are accepted as appropriate, every day attire and seem to be approved methods of self-expression.

We, with Ezekiel, look out over a valley and see it covered with dry bones.

Ezekiel first looked over this valley (3:23) and saw it as an oracle of doom. It was the site of a disastrous battle of Judah against Babylon. The nation's hope had been crushed and Judah was taken into captivity.

These dry bones were the bones of Ezekiel's friends, his family, his relatives, his countrymen. And now, they were no more: nothing but dry bones.

It is interesting that the ancient world believed bones to be much more than we do. If the bones are strong and firm, then the soul is strong; it manifests itself just as well in them as in the heart or any other vital organ. Therefore, the bones are the soul.

So, when Ezekiel looks out over the valley of dry bones, he is looking at the soul of his people, the people of God.

Have the people of God been defeated? Are the great and mighty plans of God null and void? Is the soul of Israel to now be found in dead, dry fleshless bones?

When we look out over our world today, do we see a valley of dry bones?

We, as Christians, must always seek to see and understand our world from a spiritual Christian perspective. Why, because we are Christians, followers of Christ, the son of the living God. We cannot understand the world by leaving the son of God out of our efforts to understand both the nature of and the solution to these great issues.

Psalms 36 helps us to understand the spiritual reality of our world today.

“Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flatters in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated.”

Isaiah 19 paints a magnificent picture of God with such awesomeness and clarity power:

“Behold, the lord is riding on a swift cloud and comes to Egypt ; and the idols will tremble at his presence, and the heart of the Egyptians will melt within them...

The spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their plans...

There will be bare places by the Nile , on the brink of the Nile , and all that is sown by the Nile will dry up, be driven away, and be no more...

The wise counselors of pharaoh give stupid counsel.”

These last years, these last decades, have proved, that reason, Which is not God’s reason that which sets aside the laws of God, brings only false hope, futility, despair, hatred, ruin, and destruction?

We must remember that it is God who created the gift of reason and that, whenever we attempt to reason, without the almighty who created reason for right purposes, we are doomed to failure.

Have we not read, have we not heard:

“My ways are not your ways, saith the lord.”

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the say of sinners, nor sits in the way of sinners.”

The problem with much of modern philosophy is that it is not modern. It is rehashed from ideas of old: “man knows best;” and, this concept finds its origin in the story of Adam and Eve.

Are these words of judgment God's final words to us?

When we look out over our world today, and see the valley of dry bones, we, with Ezekiel are called to proclaim a second vision: a vision of hope; a vision of power; a vision of life.

This is the hope and vision which allows and compels us to see the resurrection after the crucifixion.

When we approach the cross, when we accept the glorious message that "the son of man has come to seek and to save the lost," as we hear Jesus knocking at the door of our heart and invite him to enter, our lives are changed.

We are reborn to God's power and purpose. We see how ill-prepared we are to do the work of God. We realize, and are thankful, that daily God provides manna. He opens the windows of heaven and we are blessed.

The truth of the scripture, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" seeks to draw us closer to God to experience His life-giving and life changing power. We hear Christ tell us, "I am the bread of life." This bread of life will bring new life to the valley of dry bones.

We learn and experience our Heavenly Father's grace by which He takes away our sins and redeems us. We are delivered from the penalty of sin and the power of sin and are delivered to the presence of God.

What far greater curing of sin-sick men and women and their distressed souls pour forth from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the gift of His mercies that guides us from hopelessness to hope, from sin to salvation, from death to life.

The valley of dry bones was filled with the bones of people who sought meaning and purpose to life by asking the wrong questions. Let us learn from them.

Should we not ask ourselves, and teach our children to ask:

1. "How do we become friends with God?"
2. "How do we become rich in Christ?"
3. "How do we have a wholesome, happy heart and mind?"
4. "How do we live that peace which passes all understanding?"
5. "How do we live for Christ?"
6. "How do we let the word of Christ dwell in us richly?"

Some of you have been resisting God, having dry bones but trying to live as though they were alive and vital?

May you received and accept the power of God which raised to new life the dry bones of the valley.

Some of you have been searching for a deeper, richer walk with Christ.

May you open your soul's eye to follow the Good Shepherd in your daily walk.

Some of you have hearts troubled by financial concerns, by illness, by family matters, by business matters and you feel overwhelmed and outmatched.

May you stand with Moses, face to face with God on Mt. Sinai, and be marked with a Spiritual Halo by which you can find brightness for the dark days and claim with the Psalmist, when he cries out “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And when he makes the greatest affirmation of faith, “My flesh and heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Two visions of the valley of dry bones are before you today. Will you not claim the second vision, the vision of life with Christ, the Son of the Living God?