

The Day of Pentecost May 20, 2018

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
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<http://blog.bible/bible-blog/entry/what-does-pentecost-mean-to-you>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 497 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 224

“Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord”

Published in 8 hymnals and written by Martin Luther. Any guess’s as to what kind of hymnals?

- Listen to” Pastor Steven Newberg and Minister of Music Mark Johanson discuss the hymn of the day for Pentecost” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7CwYqenPjUY>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgyFnAk-NBo> Toccata on 'Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord' "From Mr. Hildebrand's 'Partita for Organ on Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord' Recorded at St. Andrew's Catholic Church, Roanoke, VA.”
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YUy_rDTY5xo A simple piano accompaniment.
[Andrew Remillard](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3ACDqwmIYM> “By Matthew Macheimer, from the organ book A Reformation Easter: Organ Preludes on Sixteenth-Century Hymns”, CPH

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

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Ezekiel 37:1-14; Revised Common Lectionary, (RCL), the same reading or Acts 2:1-21
(Next week: Isaiah 6:1-8; RCL, the same reading)

“The "valley of dry bones" is almost certainly the most beloved and well known of Ezekiel's visions.

The vividness of its imagery, the wonder of its unfolding narrative, and visceral appeal of its symbolism endow it with a sort of plug-and-play appeal—even an uninitiated reader can engage with this wonderful story. And yet the story becomes even more powerful when the reader learns something about its historical context, literary background, and theological symbolism... (continued after the reading)

The Valley of Dry Bones

37 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;^[a] it was full of bones. ² 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. ³ And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” ⁴ Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath^[b] to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ 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.”

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling,^[c] and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ 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. ⁹ Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, 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.”

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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.’ ¹² Therefore prophecy, 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. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ 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.”

- a. [Ezekiel 37:1](#) Or *plain*; also verse [2](#)
- b. [Ezekiel 37:5](#) Or *spirit*; also verses [6](#), [9](#), [10](#)
- c. [Ezekiel 37:7](#) Or *an earthquake* (compare [3:12](#), [13](#))

“ **Historical context** ”

This vision dates to the period of Israel's history known as the Babylonian Exile. In 597 BCE, the armies of Babylon forced the capitulation of the rebellious city Jerusalem and deported the Judean king and many Judean leaders to Babylon (2 Kings 24:10-16). Ten years later, in 587/6 BCE, after Jerusalem had rebelled again, the Babylonians razed Jerusalem and its temple and deported a second wave of Judean leaders. Among the first wave of the deported was the young Ezekiel, whom God later called in Babylon to the office of prophet. For those deportees forced to live in Babylon, the future seemed a black hole into which the people were destined to disappear...

Literary background

Behind the vision in Ezekiel 37 are two literary forms--the communal lament psalm and the prophetic message of deliverance. In communal laments, the people poured out their pain in fervent cries for deliverance. Toward the end of the oracle in Ezekiel 37:1-14, we hear the words of lament of the deported people: "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely" (v. 11). One finds similar language in the lament psalms. "My strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away" (Ps 31:10). "My bones are shaking with terror" (6:2). "My bones burn like a furnace" (102:3). The reference to "bones" here is an idiomatic way of referring to one's deepest self, or, in the case of "our bones," a way for the community to refer to its most essential self (thus also when Adam, in search of a partner finally finds Eve, he cries "This at last is bone of my bones" [Gen 2:23]). What we learn from this is that Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones is a *poetic and prophetic response* to the situation of God's people--to their sense of hopelessness, to their situation of being cut off from their land, their temple, and--they think!--from their God. The people use a common idiom of their time to express their helplessness and hopelessness. They say, "Our bones are dried up." So Ezekiel shows them a vision of exactly that: dry bones. The second literary genre that helps one understand Ezekiel's vision is the prophetic message of deliverance (also called the oracle of salvation). As is well known, the prophets were messenger sent from God bearing messages. **At times the prophets were sent with messages of judgment, calls to repentance, and admonitions to obedience. At other times--and this is the case in Ezekiel 37--the prophets were sent with good news.** The summary of Ezekiel's good news is found in vv 12-14, which culminates with these words: "I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your

own soil." Ezekiel's message is the promise that God's spirit will reach out and bring the people back from exile.

Theological symbolism

A third element in the story that is helpful is the multidimensional meaning of the Hebrew *xwr* (*ruach*). This word can mean "spirit" (as in God's spirit), "wind," and "breath." In this vision, the prophet plays on all three meanings as part of his brilliant strategy to make God's promise of return from exile ring in the ears of the deportees... The prophet's insistent use of repetition drums the point of the message into our heads: God's spirit is the key. With God's spirit, anything is possible. Without it, existence is just flesh and blood. But with God's spirit, there is life--and what Jesus called fullness of life. And there is no place on earth, no when in time, and no what in sin or situation, that can keep God's Spirit away from God's people (see Romans 8:31-38)...

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=39 **Rolf Jacobson**
Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.
- **Can't get the song out of your head? Try this** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AhAdII3yAc> .

Psalm 139:1-12 (13-16); RCL, 104:24-34, 35b (Psalm 29; RCL, the same reading)

"I want you invite you to think for a moment about the people that you know.

Who do you think knows you the best of all?

It may be your best friend. It may be a sister or brother.

Maybe it's your spouse. Or maybe it's one of your parents.

Think about that person for a moment.

How long have they known you? What secrets do you share with them? What secrets do you keep from them? How will do you think they really know you? Do they know everything?

I know when I think about the most intimate relationships that I have there are still things that the other person does not know about me. Things that they do not see about, feelings I have that I do not share. Thoughts that I keep to myself. The same is true for all of us. No one knows us or anyone else perfectly.

Yet, these intimate friendships are so important to us because we feel that when others know us, and more importantly love us, it affirms our very existence.

In Psalm 139 we hear a strange and mysterious message that God knows us in a way that no other person does or can. We hear that God is acquainted with all of our ways, God sees through the barriers we construct and the personas with put on.

God knows us. And it is an incredibly intimate knowledge..."

- <http://revplockhart.blogspot.com/2014/07/loved-deeply.html> Peter Lockhart, Uniting Church Minister, St. Lucia Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

139 O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.

³ You search out my path and my lying down

and are acquainted with all my ways.
⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
 behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.
⁵ You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.
⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 it is high; I cannot attain it.
⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit?
 Or where shall I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
 If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
 and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
 and your right hand shall hold me.
¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
 and the light about me be night,"
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
 the night is bright as the day,
 for darkness is as light with you.

¹³ *For you formed my inward parts;
 you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*
¹⁴ *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.^[a]
 Wonderful are your works;
 my soul knows it very well.*
¹⁵ *My frame was not hidden from you,
 when I was being made in secret,
 intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*
¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
 in your book were written, every one of them,
 the days that were formed for me,
 when as yet there was none of them. (Continues through verse 24)*

a. [Psalm 139:14](#) Or for I am fearfully set apart

"Few passages in the Bible speak of God's closeness to human beings with as much subtlety and force as Psalm 139. "Lord, you have searched me and known me", say the very first lines. God, the psalm tells us, is not a distant observer but one who looks deeply into individuals, who knows them not partially or one-sidedly but rather in the entirety of their existence, indeed as no one else can.

As the psalm unfolds, the tone becomes more pressing. "Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" ...

The text then takes a turn inwards. "You created my kidneys," it says literally in verse 13! In the ever concrete language of the Bible, the kidneys are often associated with decision-making. To distinguish what is right from what is not, human beings must consult deep inside themselves,

the term seems to be saying, deeper even than their hearts. The idea is close to what many people today call the conscience. Remarkably, it is here, at the very center of the psalm, where we find the one mention of praise: “I praise you for I am awesomely and wonderfully made!” Could the psalm be suggesting that one of the ways God is close to us is precisely in our desire and in our search for what is good and right and true?...

The final part of the psalm is perhaps the most surprising. All of a sudden the psalmist asks God to do away with evildoers and declares his hatred for them. As shocking as this may be, such an attitude is often considered positively in the Old Testament, for it indicates rejection of evil and, assumedly then, attachment to good. If the Gospel teaching to love one’s enemies makes these verses difficult, if not impossible, to pray as such for followers of Jesus, we can still respect the struggle they testify to... In the end, however, the psalmist does not linger in his contentions with others but continues his prayer to God... “Search me and know my heart,” he prays finally to God. For it is God who opens in our life ever again not just one way among others, but the “everlasting way”.

http://www.taize.fr/en_article167.html?date=2011-01-01 Taize “These Bible meditations are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take a moment to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a small group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.”

“Psalm 139 Used By Pro-Life, Gay Rights Groups” *If that title got your attention read the article at https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/29/psalm-139-two-causes-two-meanings_n_1386492.html?ref=religion*

Acts 2:1-21; RCL, Romans 8:22-27 or the same reading (Acts 2:14a, 22-36; RCL, Romans 8:12-17)

“Our text begins: “When the day of Pentecost arrived. . . .” Now this makes it sound like the day of Pentecost was already a known holiday. And it was. “Pentecost” is simply the Greek word for “fiftieth,” and it refers to the Jewish festival that came on the fiftieth day after Passover. And that was, as it’s called in the Old Testament, the Feast of Weeks. It came seven weeks after Passover—seven sevens makes 49, and the next day would be the fiftieth.

The Lord God had established, through Moses, the Feast of Weeks as a major festival for Israel. In the Hebrew calendar, it was one of three so-called pilgrimage festivals: Passover in early spring; Weeks, or Pentecost, in late spring; and the Feast of Booths in the fall. For those three festivals, all the men of Israel were to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and worship there at the temple. That explains why there’s a big crowd in Jerusalem on the Pentecost in our text.

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.” This is not yet that big crowd. This is a smaller group, the “they” mentioned here. It refers back to the group described in chapter one of Acts, the group of 120 believers, the first Christians who gathered together in Jerusalem in the days after Jesus’ ascension. The company of 120 included the twelve apostles, plus Mary, and other men and women who had followed Christ. Now here they are on the day of Pentecost, in Jerusalem, all together in one place.

Then it starts...”

<https://stmatthewbt.org/2010/05/23/tongues-for-telling-the-mighty-works-of-god-acts-21-21/>,

Rev. Charles Henrickson pastor of [St. Matthew Lutheran Church](#) Bonne Terre, Missouri”

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

2 When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested^[a] on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this mean?” ¹³ But others mocking said, “They are filled with new wine.”

Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.^[b] ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel, (2:28-32)

¹⁷ ““And in the last days it shall be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;

¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke;
²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness

and the moon to blood,

before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’

a. [Acts 2:3](#) Or *And tongues as of fire appeared to them, distributed among them, and rested*

b. [Acts 2:15](#) That is, 9 a.m.

“If a roomful of people given the ability to speak foreign languages sounds electrifying, try imagining a churchful of prophets.

The visible and audible signs of the Spirit receive nearly all the attention in Pentecost liturgy, art, and wonder. But Acts 2 speaks of another Pentecost sign. Although that sign may be relatively understated in the text, it has the most powerful and long-term effects. It is a manifestation of the Spirit that we continue to experience on a regular basis, although churches usually neglectfully assume that it's relegated to the repertoire of clergy and scholars. I'm talking about *prophecy*.

"What Does This Mean?"

Backwoods Galileans speaking foreign languages attract attention among the other Jews in Jerusalem -- both residents and pilgrims celebrating the Feast of Weeks (also known as the Day of the First Fruits, Shavuot, or Pentecost). Capturing attention is one thing; making sense is another. The cosmopolitan crowd expresses curiosity and scorn. They clamor for an explanation, for meaning. Peter's entire speech in 2:16-36 offers his answer to their foundational question, "What does this mean?" (2:12).

Peter's answer begins with a turn to Joel. He does not quote the Septuagint version of the prophet's oracle exactly, for he subtly reshapes Joel 2:28-32a to make it more fitting to the current occasion. Peter makes at least three significant revisions:

1. He changes the opening clause from "After these things" to "In the last days." Peter sees himself announcing a concluding, culminating era in human history. The times have changed.
2. He inserts the word *my* before "slaves." While Joel referred to "slaves" as an explicit socioeconomic class, Peter broadens the identification of this group. They are God's slaves.
3. He adds an additional "and they shall prophesy" at the end of 2:18. Peter emphasizes *why* God's Spirit is bestowed on "all flesh," given to young and old, to women and men. *It is given so that they will prophesy*. The Spirit in Acts is a Spirit of prophecy.

Peter retrieves Joel's oracle from storage and makes a few alterations so it will be appropriate for the current occasion. He is not correcting or misquoting Joel as much as he is adapting the prophet's old words for new use in new circumstances. Joel's original testimony about God has accumulated new meaning in light of God's deeds through Jesus Christ and his sending of the Spirit.

Therefore, Joel offers a resource by which Peter can answer his audience's question. Corresponding with the three revisions listed above, the oracle allows Peter to:

1. **Interpret the times.** What does Pentecost mean? The gift of God's Spirit indicates that something new in human history has begun. The times have changed.
2. **Interpret the community created by the Spirit.** What does Pentecost mean? The Spirit has come to mark the church--every member of it -- as belonging to God and as God's agent in the world. They are God's slaves.
3. **Interpret the work of the Spirit-filled community.** What does Pentecost mean? The foreign languages are not an instance of trickery or mass hysteria. God is at work here, equipping people to communicate about God. The Spirit prompts them to engage in *prophecy*. The community of faith is a community of prophets.

What Is Prophecy?

Peter does not speak of prophecy as predicting the future. Instead, prophecy is truth-telling. It is naming the places and ways where God intervenes or initiates in the world. It is a component of proclaiming the word of God and identifying God's salvation at work.

Peter's sermon does more than name the notion of prophecy. It also demonstrates it. We learn what prophecy is by watching him do it...

This is what prophets do; they show how present events might connect to God and God's purposes..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=571 Matt Skinner
Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

THE MARK CHALLENGE

Peek ahead – how does Mark handle the Pentecost story?

John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15; RCL, the same reading (John 3:1-17, RCL, the same reading)

“John 16:12-15 begins with Jesus telling his disciples, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (v. 12).

What Jesus says here seems to contradict what he had just told the disciples in 15:15: “I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.” How can Jesus have made known “everything” to the disciples and yet “still have many things to say” to them?

*Within the framework of the Fourth Gospel's theology, Jesus is the full and complete revelation of God. To see him is in fact to see God (John 14:9; cf. 1:18). This is why Jesus can say in earnest that he has revealed everything from God (15:15). This is also why Jesus's words in 16:12 cannot mean that there is new content to his revelation. Something else must be going on...”
(continued after the reading)*

“The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 15th Chapter”

²⁶“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

⁴But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to

you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

"This is the Gospel of the Lord" "Praise to You, O Christ"

"...John 16:13 adds some clarity. It won't be Jesus doing the talking but the Spirit. The disciples "cannot bear" certain things now (v. 12) but will -- through the Spirit -- be guided "into all the truth" (v. 13). This will take place at a future time, as can be seen in the future tense of the verbs used to describe the Spirit's actions (the Spirit "will guide," "will speak," and "will declare"). As the verses leading up to John 16:12-15 indicate, a fundamental difference between the current experience of the disciples at the Last Supper with Jesus and their future experience with the Spirit is that the future context is marked by Jesus's departure from the world (16:4-11; see also 16:28). The claim made by verses 12-13 is that in the post-Easter period, after Jesus' return to God, the Spirit facilitates a fuller understanding of Jesus' revelation without any change to its content. Just as Jesus did, the Spirit reveals God..."

- http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2856 **Gilberto Ruiz**
Assistant Professor of Theology, Saint Anselm College, Manchester, NH



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Come back next week to hear more about the Trinity. It's the one time of the year we use the Athanasian Creed. Follow the link if you would like a head start:

- <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/athanasian.creed.html>