

Preached by Dr. Carl Rush
Bush Hill Presbyterian Church
Alexandria, VA
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Ezekiel 37:1-14
Romans 8:6-11

DEM BONES

I believe God has a sense of humor. Pick the Ezekiel passage for the lectionary on the Sunday you are going to vote on buying property. “Stand up and preach on the dry bones.” Be my guest. Oh, and let’s change the clocks on the same Sunday just to make it more interesting. I understand that you really had a treat last Sunday with Reverend Eastman. Let’s say that we’re going to average the length of his sermon and mine today and we’ll all be more comfortable. I know it was a great message. Have we lost that discipline that he so easily demonstrated for us, to hear God’s words for more than a few sound bites?

The valley of dry bones is a symbol of a church or a nation, a community that was meant to be a blessing yet has lost confidence and hope. It had been dispersed throughout the Roman Empire and there seemed to be no way that there would ever be a nation again. God takes Ezekiel out and just to prove how it’s not based on our efforts, this following Christ, it’s not based on our gifts or our strength, not based on our numbers, it’s not based on what we can muster up on our own, it’s based on the work of God. A double work of gathering us and once we’re gathered together, once we have form, once we have identity, once we have a sense that we, indeed, are meant to function a certain way, then the Holy Spirit gives us life, and all that we’ve done before finally has meaning.

I haven’t been able to get an image out of my head all week. It is an illustration that comes from another pastor, used for this passage. It seems that the *Lego* Corporation has started doing some consulting with other businesses. A *Lego* executive comes to your office or company, interviews members of your staff or team, then creates a visual of how your company functions, using *Lego* building blocks. In one instance, there was this manager built with *Lego* pieces—he was built larger than the width of the hallway to illustrate that the company was being stalled because everything had to pass through him. The creativity had been sapped out of the company. Another showed a general leading little stick soldiers into battle. It seemed that the owner of that company functioned more like an all-powerful general than a leader, more like an autocrat than someone willing to hear the opinions of those around him. They call this metaphorical illustration. It’s just *Lego*—toys—but they charge \$7,000 for this consultation, so they have to call it “metaphorical illustration.”

If God came to us today and started to build a *Lego* image of who we are, there would be many wonderful metaphors. Going out, sending people being ordained from this congregation, those in the community, there would be images of Koinonia and of youth fellowship, there would be images of Wednesday Club and of beautiful music. Tell the truth, if you knew the motions, you would have enjoyed that second hymn (Lord, I Lift Your Name on High) more. There would be images of acceptance. There would be images of a lesson we didn’t read this morning. People were even bringing infants to

him so that he might touch them and when the disciples saw that, they sternly ordered him not to do it. Jesus called for them and said, "Let the little children come to me and do not stop them for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you, truly, whoever does not receive the kingdom as a little child will never enter it."

I pray we will never outgrow the image of "dem bones." The foot bone connected to the ankle bone, the ankle bone connected to the leg bone, all the way up to the backbone connected to the head bone where we know God has to be in charge of our decision-making; and it is so hard to pray the prayer that Christ prayed and mean it: "Not my will, but thy will, God." Thy will for me, for my children, and for your church. Dem bones will walk around and they will live and all the neighbors in the Rose Hill community and beyond will know the breath of life is here and is available to them. There cannot be a wrong decision today in our congregational meeting as long as we see Christ in one another, as long as we respect and demand from one another the honor that is due to those who trust, those who love one another. So let us continue by celebrating and recognizing our Wednesday Club volunteers and children. And let us prepare to not make it so complicated, but to receive the kingdom and the joy that the children must have felt when Christ reached out and touched them.