



Image from Carol's bucket blog/[principlebasedlearning.com](http://principlebasedlearning.com)

## **A Time Apart Worship Rutland & Church of the Wildwood Sunday, March 29, 2020**

### **Welcome**

*Despite the need to stay safe and at home, according to Vermont's Governor and many others, we know we are together in the Spirit and in worship. We are in God's loving hands as we celebrate this day in our own homes, joined in heart and mind. May God bless us all in this time of worship.*

### **Opening Prayer**

God of love and of our lives, we come together this morning at the very core of our souls. We come together asking for you to be present with us, knowing you are already here. You have prepared this very place for us, for worship – whether that be our kitchen table or comfortable chair or a special place in our home set apart for matters of the spirit and of the heart. Be with us now. Calm us and center us in your loving spirit. May we feel your presence and also the presence of all others who join us in this time of prayer. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

### **Centering Song - Let It Breathe On Me Hymnal #503**

Let it breathe on me; let it breathe on me; Let the breath of the Lord now breathe on me;  
Let it breathe on me; let it breathe on me; Let the breath of the Lord now breathe on me.

### **Scripture Reading - Ezekiel 37:1-14**

#### **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on 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." So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and

you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act," says the LORD.

## **Reflection on the Scripture**

This reading is a powerful reminder of what God is capable of doing. The prophet, Ezekiel is brought out to a valley filled with dry bones. Scholars say that a great battle was fought there and many died. It is the ultimate place of desolation. The point being made is that even here, even under circumstances such as this, God can redeem. God can bring these bones back to life, and so, what we and Ezekiel are meant to grasp from this example, is that God can also bring life to us. Even when we are feeling as if there is no hope, that our bones are dried out, our spirits are withered, even then God can breathe new life into us.

*Reflect for a few moments on times when you have felt like these dried bones. Perhaps it was after going through a health challenge or a painful issue in a relationship. Maybe you are feeling that way now? Let yourself feel the dryness. Let yourself be in that place of emptiness for a moment.*

But this story is not one of defeat. This is a story about God's love, compassion and power to make all things new. God can do this alone, but what is amazing is that God expects Ezekiel to do his part. In our own lives and experiences, God expects us to do our part as well. Here, Ezekiel is told to prophesy to the bones (he is a prophet, after all!) I imagine he has a moment of panic wondering how to do it, how to speak to, let alone prophesy to an entire field of dry bones. But God doesn't leave Ezekiel to figure it out on his own. God gives him words to say and then guides him through the whole process. This is how it is for us as well. Yes, God expects us to do the work that is ours in the world, but God supports us and guides us and gives us the wisdom that we need to accomplish what it is we are being led to do.

*Take a moment now to reflect on what your skills and gifts are, in facing the dry bones of your own life and the lives around you. What gifts has God placed in your hands and in your heart to share? Maybe you are a great encourager, maybe you have just the right words to pray for and with people? Maybe you love to serve, and are good at doing the practical work that needs to be done, even under difficult circumstances – fixing things, feeding people or doing errands? What are your gifts?*

Ezekiel had to have been more than a little surprised when the bones in that valley began clacking together. It was good that God was with him, because he may have fainted or run away out of fear when the skeletons and then bodies stood up on their feet, ready and waiting for the next good word from Ezekiel, from God.

*I believe, that if you give yourself a moment, you will be able to think about a time when you were surprised by the ways God worked through you. Think about a time when you might have said a reluctant prayer without really thinking it would make a difference, but somehow, miraculously, it did. Or think about a time when you reached out to heal a wound in a relationship against your better judgment and the end result was better than you could ever have imagined. Healing happened.*

Sometimes God uses us without our even being fully on board, and good things happen... miracles happen. After God performs the miracle of bringing all of those bones back to life, breathing the Spirit back into them, the lesson God wants Ezekiel to learn is that God is fully capable of miracles, and often those miracles are accomplished with our help. I think it makes God really happy to show us just how amazing this thing called faith can be. God shows us that our little mustard seed of faith is more powerful than we know.

The promise God offers to Ezekiel, and to us, is that our dry bones will live too. On days when we are feeling anxious and afraid, when we say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely," God responds, "You are my people. I will put my Spirit in you. And you will live again. I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I have spoken. I have done it." God's promises are powerful enough to rely on. God's promises are capable of holding us even through the difficulties we are experiencing today. These promises are fresh and alive and real. Our job is to believe in them, to believe that God will guide us through to the place of new life.

## **Prayer**

God, we are grateful for your promises. We are grateful that you are with us always. Even when you depend on us to use our skills and abilities in the world, you never leave us alone. You guide our hands, you whisper words of encouragement into our hearts and help us speak in ways that support those around us. When we grow discouraged, remind us of the valley of dry bones that live again, thanks to your breath and Ezekiel's ministry. May we breathe in the breath of Spirit, the breath of life, that you give to us today and every day. May we live with peace at the center of all that we are, thanks to your love and your breath. Amen.

**Closing Song – *Breathe on Me, Breath of God* Hymnal #420**

1. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Fill me with life anew,  
That I may love what Thou dost love,  
And do what Thou wouldst do.

2. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Until my heart is pure,  
Until with Thee I will one will,  
To do and to endure.

3. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Till I am wholly Thine,  
Until this earthly part of me  
Glows with Thy fire divine.

4. Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
So shall I never die,  
But live with Thee the perfect life  
Of Thine eternity.

**Benediction**

May God be with you today and every day, breathing life into the dry places within you. May God guide your hands, your heart and your voice to create miracles and to bring renewal, healing and life wherever they are needed. Go in peace and in love.

**Reaching Out** – *I encourage you to share your experience with this worship time with someone else. Share your insights and ask them about theirs. What miracles have you noticed in your life recently?*

**Sharing the Light of Christ** – Marcia Rose at Wildwood sends this suggestion - During World War II many people placed a light in the window as a symbol of hope and peace. Marcia is suggesting we do that now to show our support for each other during this virus crisis and our hope that it will soon pass. Christ's light continues to shine!

**Your Offering Contribution** for Rutland UMC may be sent to Rutland UMC at 60 Strongs Ave. or call the church office to contribute by credit card. Lori will return your call and walk you through the process. Offerings for Church of the Wildwood may be sent to Cyndie Clark 1 Merrick St. also in Rutland, VT 05701  
***Thank you for your continued support in these challenging times.***