

Lessons for the Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 26, 2023

Psalm 130 ~ *This cry from the depths of distress trusts confidently and waits expectantly for God's mercy.*
Ezekiel 37:1-14 ~ *Ezekiel saw that God can revive dried bones as well as the dried hopes of His people.*
Romans 8:1-11 ~ *Those who are in Christ are no longer dead because of sin, but alive through the Spirit.*
John 11:17-45 (46-53) ~ *After Jesus raised Lazarus, the leaders of the people began plotting to kill Jesus.*
or John 11:17-27, 38-53

GATHERING THE TEXTS: The Gift of the Spirit is Life.

When the people of Israel thought they had no hope because they were exiled to Babylon, God showed Ezekiel that his Spirit can make even dry bones live again. That same Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead and gives us life as God's children. After Jesus raised Lazarus, Caiaphas, speaking by the Spirit, was ready to sacrifice Jesus' life for the life of Israel.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, you are indeed the Resurrection and the Life. You have given and continue to keep me in the true faith. Strengthen my trust and comfort me with the assurance of life everlasting through the power of your redeeming death and triumphant resurrection. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: We have been given new life in Christ and spiritual gifts to use for the church's nurture and mission.

OFFERING PRAYER: Spirit power, O mighty breath of God,
Fill our hearts with hope to meet the day.
Send us out to breathe new life abroad;
Use our gifts to share Your living way. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: We scheme to oppose whatever threatens our power or authority, just as the chief priests and Pharisees did after Lazarus was raised to life again. While death is at work in our power grab, the Spirit of God is at work in Jesus' life and through his death. God restores life to our hopeless existence through the gift of His Spirit in the power of Christ.

Questions to Consider: What is the connection between spirit, breath, and wind in Ezekiel?

- Why did the exiled people of Israel need to hear Ezekiel's vision?
- Explain the contrast between flesh and spirit in Romans 8 and its relation to Baptism.
- How is Lazarus' experience reminiscent of Ezekiel's vision?
- How did God use Caiaphas in His plan of redemption?

Bonus on next page: Spirit, breath, and wind combined in service to God's Word

Come Down, O Breath of God

Come down, O Breath of God;
Completely fill this hour,
And grace your servant standing here
With Your life-giving power.
O Breath of God, come down
with grace and power.

Rush in, O Wind of God,
From corners of the earth
That through Your faithful servant's words
The lost may have new birth.
O Wind of God, rush in
and bring new birth.

O Spirit of our God,
Your mercies we employ:
As You have called Your servant here
Now bless his work with joy.
Spirit of God, lift up
our hearts with joy.

Text: Gilbert A. Franke
Tune: Marion (SM and refrain)
(LSB #813, "Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng!")