

## **Bible readings**

### **Old Testament**

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

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; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> 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."

<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, 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." <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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.' <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy, 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. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> 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."

### **New Testament**

#### **John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15**

<sup>26</sup> "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. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup> But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' <sup>6</sup> But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, 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. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning

righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;  
<sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

<sup>12</sup> “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

## **Sermon**

### *Waiting in expectation*

Looking forward to an event that is being planned, scheduled in at a certain time, comes with preparation; with anticipation, with excitement if it is a happy event; with trepidation if it is a unhappy event.

In our New Testament reading it is about something that has been planned, in heaven. Jesus knows the plan and He tells His disciples what is to be expected by them. He tells them that they have to wait in expectation.

There is an Indonesian saying that says about expectation:

“Expecting something bigger, and we let go of what we already have.”

This is the situation we have in our New Testament reading.

The birth of Jesus Christ, what He did on earth, what He passively underwent: suffering, dying and the raising from the dead; it was all planned in, and done from heaven. Now, the time has come for Jesus to return home.

For the disciples it means that they have to let go Jesus. And they are sad. Jesus knows and understands. While that is so, He tells them about how God’s plan will further unfold: His plan in which they have a crucial role. This is big.

Not until now, He tells them. Not while He was with them, but now He is about to go.

That is God’s style: His way; His timing. He lets us know what we need to know, not what we want to know. And what He lets us know is enough. Meanwhile, we can do what we have to do.

Jesus speaks about witnessing:

*the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27  
And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.  
(John 15:26-27)*

This mission is given first to His disciples, His eyewitnesses. But after that, to the whole congregation; the whole church, including Polmont Old, Laurieston and Redding and Westquarter and all other congregations. For His church stands in the apostolic succession. The witnessing of the Apostles precedes ours.

But the disciples cannot do it on their own strength. The Spirit bears witness first, and will be sent into the world to help them carry out their mission. That is the promise which with Jesus strengthens His disciples

And so God creates new beginnings, in a structured way, with attention to detail and timing.

Witnessing happens in the world where there is hostility towards God. Within that hostility, the witnessing of God; of His love, happens in all its different forms, both loudly and quietly. It is because God first loved us, that we are able to love, with the love with which we are loved, by Him

Bearing witness about Jesus begins with the deep awareness of God's love. It's an awareness that is reflected in Polmont Old's mission statement:

***to be a place where God's love is experienced and from where it is to be reflected into the community,***

This mission statement reflects the greatest commandment,

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)*

This is our source, which empowers, and so can be used constructively, honouring Him. This is our starting point.

Lifting up the eyes to God, first, we make the eyes are made available to God in order to allow Him to make them see what He wants them to see: His purpose of giving His Grace to each of His children; including the ones whom we might be slow to embrace, while reminding ourselves and each other that not our, but ...

*Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...*

...words from the Lord's Prayer, prayed every Sunday with the one voice of the congregation. We can be sure that the harmony of praying voices finds its way into heaven and is received, by the One who continues to work in mysterious ways.

Another Indonesian saying is: 'Those who do not go to the well every day, won't be able to find it in the night.'

In Indonesia, especially in the inlands, there are still various roads that lead to the well. Imagine that you need water in the night, when it is pitch black. If you have not been to the well regularly, you get lost. But those who go to the well every day won't have that problem.

That is also so for your well of love and faith. When you don't go to the well; which is God Himself, every day, you don't learn; don't get familiar with the way to Him, through Jesus, and you don't get nurtured. What follows from not being nurtured is that faith gets as dry as the bones in the valley, as we have it in Ezekiel's passage. This what the passage is about: faith that has dried out, is dead.

The Spirit in Ezekiel is the Spirit of God as the helper, promised by Jesus to His disciples; the Spirit that brings life and equips.

There is a description of the helper's task in our reading: when the Spirit comes, it will demonstrate the wrong of the world; its guilt

The Spirit has the capacity to unmask. There was no ground on which Jesus was rejected. He was rejected because of pure blindness. That is why Jesus said: 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' The consequence of the blindness for God's way of love, through Jesus, is overstepping boundaries.

As it happens in the garden of Eden.

The Royal Dutch Football Association stated that the increase in football hooliganism is to do with not acknowledging boundaries. What is not acknowledged will not be respected, with all its consequences.

The role of the helper is like that of a public prosecutor. It makes the same statement as the cross does: it criticises the practices of the world that follow from not seeing Jesus as God's Son.

This helper was promised by Jesus, when the time to part from His disciples had come: when He ascended to heaven.

This helper helps not to cross lines.

Ten days after Ascension Day, we celebrate that the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven. With that, the church was born.

God does not let go what His own Hand began. He Himself leads us into the future that He has prepared for us. That is His promise.

Amen