

Our scripture lessons tell two stories of death and returning to Life. Fitting for this time of year. These are 2 amazing stories. Absolutely miraculous beyond our ability to comprehend. Let's look at each of the stories.

What a story about the old bones. Did this actually happen? Did bones in a field actually come back together and regain muscle, tendon, skin and breath? Or is this a story that is told to teach us something? If it is a story meant to teach us – what are we meant to learn from it? Do the bones represent actual bones – or are they a metaphor? Could they be a metaphor for humans who have are lost or separated from the Love of God? For when we are separated from God, are we not dead? I know when I have allowed myself to fall away from God, I struggle with everyday life. I feel a void in my life, empty. The scripture tells us: "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.' The profit Ezekiel is reminding us – separated from God, we are but dried bones. Ezekiel prophesies, and says 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.

Is this the promise of everlasting life? Or is this the promise that; when we follow Jesus every day, we will be more whole. Romans answers this question for us in chapter 8:6-11: To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law-- indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

This scripture says to me, if I am striving to follow Jesus, and I have the Holy Spirit to guide my life, I will have life, both in this world and in the world to come. These lessons tell us that when we are separated from God, and don't feel the Holy Spirit in our lives because we are focusing too much on the ways of society, we might as well be dead. We cannot serve God if our goals are based on this earthly world.

What about the Story of Lazarus? Is this a metaphor – or did this actually happen? The way I read this scripture, this actually happened to show the people that Jesus truly is the son of God. How in the world could this be witnessed or heard about in real time – and not be believed? How could one doubt that Jesus is Lord and Savior? But some did. Many did – because Jesus was crucified!

What would it take for us all to believe? What would it take for you to believe? Faith is an amazing gift. We believe, not because we have seen bones come together. Not because we have seen a man come to life after being dead for 4 days. Not because we saw Jesus crucifixion and not because we saw him walk the Earth 3 days later. We believe because we have the gift of faith. Because we study the word of God. Because the word of God is written on our hearts. We believe because we see the difference in our own lives when we have strayed versus how we feel when we are in relationship right with God.

Lent is the time of year when we examine our personal relationship with Jesus. When we take time to be still, to listen to the Holy Spirit. When we ask God to forgive our sins and bring us closer into relationship with Him. Amen.