Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” (Matt 22:35).

Ez 37:1-14; Matt 22:34-40

Today’s first reading from Ezekiel 37 is about God’s promise to breathe new life into the “dry bones” of a defeated, exiled nation. As the word of God is spoken through the prophet, a defeated people rise up to renewed life.

In today’s gospel passage from Matthew, we see what the “bones” of a living, breathing faith actually are. Jesus answered the lawyer’s question about which of the commandments of the Law was the greatest. It is the commandment to love God totally—heart, mind, soul and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself. This commandment is the fundamental structure of lived faith, what holds everything together in right relationship.

The broad sweep of salvation history includes failure. God the Creator initiated his people's existence by naming, loving and guiding them; God also was there as Savior to rescue and restore them when they turned away from the Covenant. The full story is not just about the original blessing and promise; it is about the revelation that even when we fail to respond to grace, God is still merciful.

Psalm 34:20 says that the bones of the Servant of the Lord will not be broken. This image is applied to Jesus by the evangelist John (19:36), who presents Jesus as the paschal lamb sacrificed at Passover, the ritual meal that prepared the people for their exodus from slavery into freedom. Unlike all previous animal sacrifices, Jesus’ self-offering is perfect. He is unblemished and, even in his violent death, his bones are not broken. Jesus is the model of perfect obedience to the Great Commandment of love.

This biblical imagery is meant for us as we live out our small stories within the larger story of Salvation. If we align our lives in right relationship with God and neighbor, we will come through death to new life, not by our own efforts or merits but because of God’s mercy. If we keep our eyes on the prize -- Jesus himself -- we will see how to live the gospel by aligning the bones of our lives to imitate his life.

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