



SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE
FOR ALL SAINTS SMALL GROUPS

“The Again Genesis” | Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt | January 19, 2020

Ezekiel 37:1-10 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. 2 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. 3 And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” 4 Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5 Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6 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.” 7 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. 8 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. 9 Then he said to me, “Prophesy 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.” 10 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.

EPISTLE READING 1 Peter 1:3-9 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in

Second Sunday in Epiphany

Epiphany—to reveal or to make known, time to more fully see Christ

Key word I Peter 1:6 “grieved.” Tim quoted Armando Valladares, imprisoned by the Cuban government and witness to firing squad deaths and the harassment of women family visitors, writing about the effect of such pain on his beliefs. The excerpt led to the key question: how do we combat the adverse effects of the world’s depravity and sin on our faith?

1. The Valley

I Peter 1:3 refers to being born again. A “born again” Christian is not a type of Christianity; it is Christianity. Nicodemus, the book of James, and Ezekiel all refer to being born again.

The dry, bleached bones of Ezekiel’s valley—nothing more obviously dead—offer a picture of the spiritual state of the nation of Israel then, as well as all people, all cultures, and all times since then. Their obvious sterility prompts the question from God to Ezekiel, “Can these bones live?” Rhetorical answer is “No.” Ezekiel hedges by deferring to God, and God answers by doing: connecting, fleshing out, raising, and breathing in new life. God asks us the same question: do we dare to believe that what is dead inside and around us can live again?

2. Vitality

Vitality in a spiritual sense is the presence of energy or liveliness that is God himself, us partaking of the very nature of God.

Eph. 2:4-5 “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgression—it is by grace you have been saved.”

Phil. 3:10a “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection...”

Armando Valladares witnessed young men shouting, “Viva Christo Rey!” in the face of a firing squad, and it changed him dramatically. What was a religious belief system became a way of life.

the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Matthew 16:21-26 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

C. Everett Koop’s rebirth happened slowly, over a year and a half of listening to the preaching of Dr. Donald Barnhouse. One day he realized he had gone from skepticism to belief. Mt. 19:28 refers to the new life of a believer as *palingenesia* (παλιγγενεσία), a new beginning. The inclusion of the word genesis also alludes to the new world recreated from the old, fallen world and perfected in the book of Revelation, and to the new life of a believer in Paul’s epistles.

The application for us is that we don’t need to put up with the old temptations and sins because the power of the new birth saves us. Tim illustrated the new life with an episode for the life of St. Augustine. Augustine saw a woman from his old life on the street. When she hailed him, saying “It is I,” he responded, “I know, but it is not I.” A newborn believer is no longer the same person.

3. Glory (The New Life)

Self-denial and suffering, as well as glory, are part of this new life, both internally and externally. In the ancient world, weight meant value, thus the contrast between the weight of glory and a transitory breath.

I Peter 3:7 and 8 emphasize joy and glory, but the verses don’t skip the suffering that must precede the joy. It comes in the form of various trials and causes a refining process similar to the refining of gold. The maker heats the gold to melt all the impurities and the gold, skims off the dross, then cools the gold and repeats the process again and again until the impurities have all been skimmed away. Peter says this is what God does to us after the new birth. We now have, however, the vitality given by God to survive the process. What do you really, truly want out of life? What if you said you wanted a “weighty soul”? Let go of the dross, and let God skim it off. Rejoice in the glory that results.

Discussion

Use the prayer in the Friday daily office to spark your search for the weight of glory.

Consider your own new birth. Can you say you are born again? What glory and joy do you experience as a result of your new birth? What trials have “grieved” you and brought your dross to the surface? What specific habits and practices help you to maintain your vitality in the face of trials? Visit again I Peter 1:7 to remind yourself that your griefs will “result in praise and glory and honor” when Jesus comes again. How does this happen?