

SEEK THE LORD

“Strength for Tired, Dried Up Bones”

A pastor was visiting in the home of one of his parishioners. A small boy in the home started reaching for the potatoes before the blessing was said. His mother scolded him. The boy was confused. Why were they at the table, except to eat? As the adults bowed their heads for grace, the child suddenly caught on. As his father started to pray, the boy shouted, “Hey Dad! Could I be the one to talk to the plate this time?”

The little boy’s understanding may not be all that far from the truth. Some prayers I have heard were not much more than talking to plates. (I have probably even said a few myself.) Prayers to plates are the kind when you’re only going through the motions. They are dull, dry and have no forethought or passion.

I often catch my self just going through the motions of life. This experience is similar to an amazing story in the book of Ezekiel, chapter thirty seven. Ezekiel has a vision of a valley of dry bones.

“By the spirit of the Lord,” Ezekiel testifies, “I was set down in the midst of a valley; it was full of bones.” These might have been the bones of an army trapped and killed by hostile forces. The flesh had long ago decayed. Now, there was nothing left but a pile of bones baked by the sun. Ezekiel commented, they ‘were very dry’.

In this picture of death, the Lord asks Ezekiel a powerful question, “Son of man, can these bones live?” It is a question we ask ourselves. Is there more to life? Can I break out of this cycle of going through the motions? Can I go on? Is there hope?

In his book *Believe and Belong*, Bruce Larson tells about a gigantic statue of Atlas in the entrance of the RCA Building on Fifth Avenue in New York City. Here is Atlas, this beautifully proportioned man who, with all his muscles straining, is holding the world upon his shoulders. Even though he is the most powerfully built man on earth, he can barely stand up under the burden. “Now that’s one way to live,” Larson says, “trying to carry the world on your shoulders.”

On the other side of Fifth Avenue, Larson notes, is St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and there behind the high altar is a shrine of the boy Jesus. He is perhaps eight or nine years old, and with no effort he is holding the world in one hand. “We have a choice,” says Larson. “We can carry the world on our shoulders, or we can say, “I give up, Lord; here is my life. I give you my world, the whole world.”

All too often we are striving and straining like Atlas and it keeps us down to a very low level of living. When we give the load to the Lord, and the burden is lifted off our shoulders, we can spring up to a new life like the bones in the valley. when Ezekiel spoke the words of the Lord to the bones, “the breath of life came into them, and they lived ...”

Prayer: Our Lord, help us to believe that even dry bones can live again.

Amen

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