Reflection
March 22, 2026

GOD'S QUICKENING POWER

Psalm 130:1–7; Ezekiel 37:1–14

During summertime my husband and I love walking after supper. Aside from the health benefits, I also enjoy watching the sunset; twilight is my favourite time of day. Last year, after exploring almost every walking path in town, we decided to visit Mount Pleasant Burial Park for a change one evening. I had heard it was the oldest cemetery in Swift Current, and I was curious to see it. As we strolled around the grounds, we looked at the graves and slowly got to know some of the people resting there by reading their names and the dates of their birth and passing. We also looked at the writings on the gravestones or the epitaphs. I actually found it quite meaningful. I recommend you try it too, when you have a chance. Anyway, after a while, and it started to get dark, I asked Mike, my husband, if we could head back home. Not only were there too many mosquitoes feasting on us already, but I also started to feel uneasy for reasons I couldn't quite explain. Well, the truth is, I am not comfortable with death or the thought of being surrounded by it. In the churches where I have served before, I have officiated many funerals. I have comforted and stayed beside family members while loved ones took their last breath. I have witnessed deaths in homes and hospitals. I am familiar with death, based on those experiences. I know there was nothing to be scared of; in the graves were the remains of people deeply loved by others. Still, being surrounded by death, whether literal or emotional, can make everything feel heavy and uncertain. It

represents the end of existence. Yet, despite the darkness and hopelessness it brings, there is still life.

If I were Ezekiel, commanded by God to prophesy to dry bones scattered in a valley, I would be afraid. I would have to listen, because God would be telling me to go on a mission or do something, but I would be uncomfortable. In our scripture today, based on the lectionary on this fifth Sunday in Lent, the prophet Ezekiel, in his vision, listened. When God told him to speak to the bones, he proclaimed, *“I am going to breathe life into you. I will fasten sinews on you, clothe you with flesh, cover you with skin, and give you breath. And you will live; and you shall know that I am Yahweh.”*

Ezekiel from the Old Testament was known for his dramatic visions, such as the Divine Chariot and the Valley of Dry Bones, which we heard about today. His role was both priest and prophet during the Babylonian Exile. Ezekiel himself had been taken captive to Babylon along with other exiles from Judah. In his time, Jerusalem had fallen. The temple was destroyed. Homes were burned. The people said, “Our bones are dried up, and our hope is gone.” They were in despair. They felt scattered, forgotten, and hopeless. They were deprived of their land and their ability to communicate with God, the way they knew how, which is to worship, because the temple was destroyed. To them, there was nothing but death around. It’s worth noting that Ezekiel’s vision speaks to Old Testament Israel rather than the present-day nation. A distinction that feels important given what is happening in the world today.

Now, I invite you to think about Ezekiel’s vision. Pause for a moment and reflect. Imagine yourself standing in a valley full of dry bones. Everywhere you look, there is

nothing but dryness and emptiness. (Moment to think) How do you think that would feel?

I am certain that many of us have walked through valleys of dry bones. We have been in situations where hope is absent, perhaps during economic hardship, serious illness, death itself, grief, or family struggles. Valleys of dry bones surround us, visible in the world today, particularly in places experiencing conflict and war, such as Palestine and beyond. Many of these areas are literally dry. There, you see hopelessness and scattering. Life is present, but joy is hard to find. People exist, but they do not feel fully alive. Like the people in such conditions, we may wonder: Where is God? Is God still faithful? Can life return?

As we continue looking at Ezekiel's vision, we see that when he prophesied, the bones began to rattle. They came together, bone to bone. Muscles and skin covered them, but there was still no life. Then God said, "Prophesy to the wind and say, 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'" The word *breath* here represents the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that gives life back to what has become dry and lifeless.

I once read a prayer that says: "*Come, Holy Spirit, come to the places in our lives that are dead and lifeless and loveless, and bring hope. Bring forth your quickening power. Breathe on us and give us life.*" Something in that prayer struck me. The word ¨quickening¨ sounds so powerful and full of life. It means "to restore life, to make active or alive." The Hebrew word used here is ruah, which means wind, breath, or spirit. In Ezekiel's vision, the bodies were formed, but they were not alive until God breathed into

them. Genesis 2:7 says: "*God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being."*

Re-creation happened only when God breathed. That is God's quickening power, the power to restore life, to awaken, to make life alive again. God's quickening power is not only about bringing life, but also about restoring hope where hope has died. We live by breathing in and breathing out. If we only inhale and never exhale, we cannot live. Breath sustains us. God's Spirit sustains nations, churches, and individual lives. In Ezekiel's vision, when the people felt completely defeated, God's Spirit breathed hope into them and brought them home. God proved faithful.

I grew up singing traditional hymns in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, in one of its local churches in our area that our family attended. We sang hymns in our local dialect, and in Tagalog. One of my favourites is "*Great Is Thy Faithfulness,"* you will find it on page 288 of Voices United. Its title in Filipino is *"Tunay Kang Matapat*." When I sing this hymn with a congregation, you will hear my voice on top of everybody else´s. It might have happened here in the sanctuary. Pardon me for that, but I cherish this hymn so much, and I loved singing it as a child. I love singing it with conviction every time.

In Tagalog, allow me to share the refrain with you this morning:

Tunay kang matapat, tunay kang matapat
Araw-araw aking namamalas;
Ang nasa ko ay aking natatanggap,
Tunay kang matapat hanggang wakas.

In English, its literal translation says:

You are truly faithful.
Every day I experience your faithfulness.
All I have longed for, I receive.
You are faithful to the end.

This testimony is true in my life. And I believe it is true for all of us. Even in seasons of dryness, in valleys of bones and in despair. God is faithful. God restores us. God gives life. The same Spirit who breathed into the dry bones breathes into our weary hearts. But notice: God used Ezekiel as an instrument. The prophet had to speak. He had to trust and to obey.

Today, God may be calling us to become instruments of that same quickening power: to offer encouragement without judgment, to support someone in despair, be present with those who feel scattered, and to trust that when we need hope, God will breathe hope into us and we will be helped. God provides help in many forms. God is blowing in the wind and is rebuilding what feels broken.

The question God asked Ezekiel is also asked of us: “Mortal, can these bones live?” And our answer, even in faith and in uncertainty, is “Yes!” In Psalm 130, we heard from verse 7, “I *wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.”* The same Spirit that raised dry bones to life is the same Spirit moving among us today, bringing hope, healing, and new life. May we trust that breath, and carry that hope. And may we become instruments of God’s quickening power in the world. Amen.