**“How He Loved”**

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Romans 8:1-11

John 11:1-45

Lent 5

“There is therefore now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**. For the law of the Spirit of life has **set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** For **God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit**.

“**If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of the 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 Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who dwells in you**.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

We hear of dry bones (death with decay) and the death, then, of a friend of Jesus’, tragic enough in the **grave of it** that Jesus wept. Romans acknowledges the body’s “**death because of sin**”, and death is the **ugliest of the temporal consequences of sin**. The only thing **worse than an earthly death is a forever one**. And some people **choose both** by settling for / choosing a “condemnation” by “not belonging to Christ” / by “setting their minds on the **flesh** rather than the **Spirit**” / by “**not having** Christ in them”. The last thing Christ **will defeat (and that part is not yet done until the final judgement)** is **mortality from sin**. **Then** the “mortal will get clothed in immortality” as 1st Corinthians 15 says … and those in Christ look-so forward to that.

And **eternal death (“condemnation”)** ought be reminded to humanity in what’s left in **physical death**. Because earthly death still takes us, the fact of eternal condemnation **has got to be reckoned with**.

**Text**

God reckons with it by hating the fact of it / saving in spite of it / by **LOVING THROUGH** (“**LOVING BY AND HOW**” in the words of the Romans text) “condemning sin **in His own flesh**” / by **becoming that death** / **living and Himself dying** “**in the likeness of sinful flesh**”.

The Old Testament and Gospel readings are there to **unpack** what’s dense in that Epistle teaching. A life in the Spirit” **in spite of** (and, of course, **above and beyond**) a “life in the flesh” is **graphically depicted in the valley of the dry bones described in Ezekiel 37**. From out of the death and decay of sin can come (by the workings shown in that account) a resurrection, first of flesh, then **of the Spirit which is far more than that for those actually of the “Spirit of life”**. I’m not sure that everybody in this world realizes that **there is this physical resurrection to an existence after earthly death** (I’ve heard people deny that, thinking they’ll just cease to exist, but that’s clearly not the case). Everyone **will get their bodies back, bone and flesh, Ezekiel says**. And it’s what we acknowledge through the creeds in the 3rd Article professing the “resurrection of the dead” since Christ’s. **Condemned or saved, all will rise bodily from an earthly death to an eternal “something or other”**. **Victory** **over the physical part of the seeming-permanency of death** **occurred because of Easter** …

… yet its permanency would, obviously, not be the **desired situation if settling for condemnation / being apart from salvation by choice**.

Ezekiel demonstrates the **physical resurrection** yet adds to that demonstration the **real** part of life for the resurrected one’s having **been blessed by** the “Spirt of life by being (as it says) **prophesied over**”, **becoming** in the receipt of that, “**set free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death**”. First, the resurrection of **all** flesh will occur at the future judgment: “bones coming together, bone to its bone, sinews and flesh upon them”, but with no “eternal life breath in them” … just humanity, not salvation. But, then, “**prophesy to the breath; prophesy. O Breath” (the Spirit of God), “come from the four winds and breathe on these, that they may live”** **… and have eternal life gifted them … forever glorified and walking, even though they, by flesh, had died**. “Behold” (you “House of Israel”, all who **really need to be contending with the fact of the need for being saved from sin and God’s accomplishment of that in Christ:** “**I will open your graves and raise you from your graves. You will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves. I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live. I have spoken, and I will do it”**.

Who, again, is that **“I” accomplishing it and placing His Spirit within people**? Well, it’s the One shown caring about it and powerful over it, exhibited all that in the town of Bethany:

**IT’S JESUS THAT RAISES LAZARUS FROM HIS FOUR-DAY-OLD DEATH**

**JUST SHORT OF HIS OWN DEATH AND RESURRECTION**.

“By this time there will be an **odor**”, Lazarus’ sister said to Jesus, noting that the **stench of death is really a stench**. Thus **“Jesus wept” at the death of His friend** and yet **dealt with it** (**changed even, in this case, it’s physical outcome for the moment so that people would see it and believe that the Father had sent Him to change death’s context**. Jesus was the one, even, to change what it’s **called in people in Him: just “falling asleep”**. Yet **HIS (and its why the proximity of this issue within two weeks of His Passion), would be a complete and un-softened death first … a real ugly DEATH** making ours (then) much the better.

**Application**

“**For those who are in Christ Jesus**, there is **now** (therefore and thereafter the Lord’s Passion) **no condemnation**. **BY sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (and for sin) He” (God the Father) “condemned sin in the flesh” (what we have to watch happen on a cross at the crucifixion of the Divine Son)**. He (Jesus / God’s Son / Himself God) **died DEATH** (**an especially cruel DEATH physically and cosmically tweaked by the principalities of Hell**), and its possible that Jesus’ weeping may have been also (just a bit) in **His** **looking ahead and knowing what the next two weeks would bring to Him**. His sweating of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane expressed some of the **anguish over what suffering had to be His for the reality of human sin** …

… and I think I want to leave you with **that** for this almost end of the Lenten Season as it, then, moves us into Holy Week next weekend. **“Jesus wept” over death … and maybe, also, His own and the need for it**. **THAT’S** “**How He Loved**”, to be **a cinematic epic** for all of us who watch. **Our resurrection promised unto life was** **not acquired cheaply … it was by God’s extreme love**. To see **HOW** **God loved us**, we have to be where Jesus walked to His death and present Himself to the city that would kill Him, giving Himself up to the arrest of soldiers and to trials and whippings … and to a cross … **us watching all of it**.

May our viewing (**unavoidably THERE if to be appreciated**) grant a great measure of **love for our Lord in return**. In Jesus’ name. Amen.