

Sermon Starter – Called to Life

Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11, John 11:1-45

These texts confront the denial of death that is endemic to North American culture. They plunge us into the great paradox of Lent: that we must face death in order to find life. The valley of the dry bones, the psalmist's cry "out of the depths," and Lazarus' death provide dramatic images of death. The "very dry" state of the bones in Ezekiel and the bad smell at Lazarus' tomb depict the hopelessness that accompanies death. This hopelessness needs confronting. Too often we preach about death only at funerals. These texts provide an opportunity to engage the "out of the depths" nature of death with our people, and through that process to find hope.

Paradoxically, good news from this confrontation of death is found in each text. Ezekiel's dry bones come to life. Wildly unbelievable words of hope from God are given to hope-starved Israel by the prophet: "I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live ..."

The life-giving presence of the Spirit in the lives of believers is affirmed and celebrated in Romans 8:11: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies ..." The climax of the Lazarus story is Jesus' self-revelation: "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live."

From Leader, Winter 2010-2011. ©2011 MennoMedia.