



Sunday, March 29th

Preacher: Min. Barbara Florvil

Sermon Title: The Spirit of a Hustler

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14 (NRSV)

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath[a] to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on 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." So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord."

Sermon Summary:

Many of us have the spirit of hustler. We know how to make bleak situations wonderful with very few resources. We've learned how to hustle the best out of the worst life has to offer. However, with all that we have salvaged and made valuable, there are still some things that did not make it out of battles we have fought in life. When you are surrounded by reminders of all that you have lost on the battlefield of life, God may lead you to see and feel the extent of the tragedy and ask a question: "Can these bones live?"

In Ezekiel 37, the Prophet Ezekiel shows us a few things about how to respond. Remember the answer is always "only you know God." Because only God knows, you can remember all that God has done in your life before, you can trust God with the process and you can trust God for God's breath and, therefore, God's spirit. After all, the only thing God really needs us to know is that God is God.

Life Application Questions:

1. Reflect on a time when you were in God's process. What was it like? Did you recognize at the time that you were in a process? If you did, what are some things that you knew back then that helped and can help you in a current or future process? If not, what can you apply from today's sermon for a current or future process?
2. Think back to some of your favorite hustlers (those people who took what they had and made something special or sustaining). What were some of the characteristics that made them great hustlers? In what ways does their hustle remind you of what God (the ultimate Hustler) requires of his hustlers?
3. Minister Florvil reminded us that, "When you can make something out of nothing you have a hustler spirit." The beauty of the grace of God is that it empowers us to make the most out of situations even when we lack resources. As you consider what you're living without our missing out on in this pandemic season, take a moment to list the new things God is doing in your life. What hidden beauty have you found? What new opportunities have excited you? Do you see future opportunities to make something out of nothing?

Spirit Work:

1. Reflect on a past valley situation. Write a prayer of thanksgiving, a poem or an affirmation reflecting on how God brought you out of the valley? Think of someone who needs that prayer, affirmation or poem and send it to him or her. If you are in the valley, write a letter to God describing your thoughts, feelings and needs at this time. Consider using this letter to send in a prayer request to ASBC so that others may join you in prayer.
2. Minister Florvil reminded us that sometimes we get so caught up in life that we forget to breathe. One morning, set your watch, phone or other timer to remind you to take ten deep breaths at least three times that day. When you breathe, notice how you feel,

notice your thoughts, notice any changes in your mind, body and spirit. After breathing, take a Selah moment and reflect on God's love, grace and mercy. At the end of the day, write in your journal about the process of doing this breathwork.

3. *Pause for Breath.* The sermon taught us that "It takes our breath being threatened for us to appreciate it." Too often we fail to appreciate things until we're at risk of losing them. Make a list of 1-3 things that you'd like to express a deeper level of gratitude for. Set an alarm at noon or another time of your choosing for each day this week. When the alarm goes off, pause for 1 minute to express gratitude to God in your own way.