The Feast of the Resurrection
Rolling Meadows - 1965

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IN NOMINE JESU

Ezekiel 37: 13-14 You shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O My people. And I will put My Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the Lord have spoken, and I have done it.

DEAD BONES LIVE!

The surest evidence of the glory of the miracle which is the Resurrection of our Lord is the fact that you are gathered here in the House of God, and that this House of God is standing here on the outskirts of one of the great cities of the world. It is nearly 2,000 years and 10,000 miles away that this triumph over death took place. The miracle of Easter is the reality of the Church and its people - the fact that we live under the imperative that the Crucified Christ rose from the dead. Our Easter text this morning says nothing about Christ's return from death to life - and that now He rules as our Risen Lord - comparable only to the sun in the sky as it gives light, and warmth, and power, and growth to our life. We are dealing with a prophecy from the prophet Exekiel which puts the whole matter squarely on a personal basis. YOU shall know - When I open YOUR graves - Raise YOU from YOUR graves, O my people - I will put My Spirit within YOU and YOU shall live. This brings the resurrection down to every house and every heart. This is the miracle of Easter - that a man knows that because Christ lives he shall live also.

In the brightness of the Resurrection, we are to see our own emerging life. We are to see the vision of the Valley of the Dead Bones and the Spirit of God moving upon them and making them alive. What the prophet saw so long before Christ we are to see again when the Judgment Day has come and the trumpet of God has sounded.

All mankind lives under the destiny of death. We know that we are, all of us, doomed to die. It makes no difference what a man wanted, or what he did, or what goals he achieved. At the end there is always only death and the grave. Even Christians have only this as the end of their lives. But once you have said that - then everything else begins to move from the side of God - He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his evil way and

and live. He cannot bear the death of man, and so He sent His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The earnest Word of Scripture, For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return, applies to the imagination of man's heart, for it belongs to that which is our flesh and blood and therefore cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Our entire being, with body and soul, does not qualify for everlasting glory, and therefore, the Living Lord returning to the Valley of the Dead Men's Bones, must not only change some little thing about us, but must transform us entirely, body and soul. That is why the body, long mouldering in the grave when He comes, will become completely renewed and arise incorruptible. We shall not receive back that poor decayed flesh and blood - but with a new transfigured, glorified body and soul, which no death can touch, and no corruption defile, we shall rise and stand before Him and live with Him forever. This is the miracle which the Prophet speaks of when he says, You shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and I have done it. We who are the people of the Easter miracle ought to look forward to that day when the Resurrected Christ shall stretch forth His hand and brush aside the limits of the horizon which are set for our flesh and blood and give us instead the glorious song: Death is swallowed up in victory - O death, where is thy sting? - O grave, where is thy victory?

For the people of the Old Testament it was a long way to Christ and the Resurrection - but even then God moved among them with hope, and peace, and joy. They knew that sin was a separation from God as surely as was death - and so they looked upon the power of God over the dead men's bones as a promise that God had not forgotten - the He would brush aside the things which separated and defiled and give us Christ, the Messiah, who draws together and makes alive. That is why it was necessary for Christ to conquer sin. He, the sinless one, could accept death and not be conquered by it. He could rise again on the Third Day because sin had no dominion over Him. Even here in the Old Testament hope sounds like the triumphant voice of the Apostle: Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory

through our Lord Jesus Christ. The Resurrected One brings joy and peace because in every day of our life where we are beset by the fear of sin and death He come as Lord and Savior. We can be steadfast in this faith, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord because we know that our labors are not in vain in the Lord.

Now look at the attitudes which people take toward death. They do not want to talk about it, or they will want to joke about it. They will try to tre it with indifference, leaving you to feel that they have an unconcerned, even a jaunty and courageous attitude, toward it. You will find them laughing at death - but not with the triumphant laughter of faith - but with the ironic laughter o forced unconcern, as of one to whom death is without significance and life, therefore, without meaning. Make no mistake about it - such an attitude is just a poor device with which a troubled soul covers up its fears. People like that ar really afraid of looking down at the Valley of the Dead Men's Bones. They are trying to camouflage the ugliness - much as these dirty flower pots are covered with tissue paper. They have never believed His Word, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O My people.

Then again there are people who dread leaving the known world to set out upon an unknown journey. Francis Bacon said years ago, Men fear death as children fear to walk in the dark. And O Henry, the great novelist, calls to his nurse, Light me a candle please; I am afraid to go home in the dark. Most of all we hate to have our enterprises and our schemes interrupted. We cannot say with Christ, It is finished. We dread separation from those whom we love. We hesitate to believe that separations are only for a little while. A little while and you will see Me no more; again a little while and you will see Me - Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

There is no Word in Scripture to give to those who reject the promises of God. If they will not accept the gift of His Son and believing on Him have eternal life, they are already under the judgment - that the Light is come into

the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. Death, the Valley of the Dead Men's Bones, the whole story of man's futil attempts to live on and on - they all point to a strict accounting before our God. The entire Scripture offers no Word of hope to those who remain in unconfessed and unforgiven sin. God offers His pardon to all. To reject it is to reject the hope of the Resurrection too!

The whole Scripture offers no Word of hope to privileged people who ar unconcerned about the needs around them. You have only to hear Jesus' solemn words in the Last Judgment: Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye did it not unto Me. There is no way of changing this verdict. Loveless living is already eternal death - because God is love and we are called to be His children in Christ.

Need men fear the Valley of the Dead Men's Bones? It all depends upon the men. Christians need not fear death. We have no right to allow ourselves t be held in bondage and the fear of death. Jesus Christ came to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage....I will put My Spirit within you and you shall live - you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it. Glad Ezekiel - little could he know how on the hill of Jerusalem there would be the shocked joy of the women - come early to the tom - when the angel says, He is not here, He is risen as He said. Hopeful Ezekiel - when in faith he sees the Apostles gone out into all the world to preach that me would rise and live again.- that the Spirit of God upon these men would enable them to preach Christ's glorious words, Because I live you shall live also... I am come that they - dead bones in the deep valley - might have life and might have it more abundantly. With the Spirit of God upon them these men could go out to proclaim that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life - that whosoever believet in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. They would close their sermons with the thundering call, CHRIST IS ARISEN. ALLELUIA, and would hold the hands of the dying firm in the faith that I, the Lord have spoken, and I have don it. That makes the Resurrection hope, and joy, and peace. Amen.