

*“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”*

You have probably heard that question from Mary Oliver, in her well-loved poem, “Wild Geese”. At first, it sounds simple, almost like a question about your plans or goals, or about how you want to spend your time. But, of course, it is not so simple.

Personally, I have always found it startling, like a wake-up call. The longer I sit with it, the more it begins to shift. Each time, I have different answers. Sometimes, I end up with more questions.

How about you?

For me, it starts to feel less like a question about what we will do, as “Human Do-ings”. It feels more like a question about how we will live, as “Human Be-ings”. About what moves us. About what is alive in us.

And there is something about those words that lingers.

*Wild... and precious.*

Wild, in the sense that life does not always move in ways we can control. It surprises us. It unsettles us. It takes turns we would not have chosen. And precious, in the sense that it is given. Not earned. Not something we create for ourselves. Something entrusted to us.

And maybe that is where the question truly begins. Rather than starting with what we will do, it invites us to ask how we will live inside a life that is both a gift and a mystery.

So let me ask it this way.

*What is giving your life breath today?*

Not what are you doing? Not what you accomplish. But what breathes through you? What shapes you from the inside out?

Because there is a difference between being alive and having life in us. We all know what it is to go through the motions. To do what needs to be done, to show up, to keep things going. And sometimes we can do all of that and still feel a little disconnected, a dis-ease, a little like something inside us is a bit “off”.

And that is where Ezekiel finds himself in this strange vision. Standing in a valley filled with bones. No wholeness...just the remnant of what once was. A people who feel as though life has drained out of them.

And it is important to remember that this vision does not come out of nowhere. Ezekiel is speaking to a people who have lost everything. Their home is gone. Their temple is gone. The structures and foundations that once held their lives together have fallen apart. They are living in exile, physically and spiritually. They are trying hard to make sense of a story that no longer makes sense.

So when they say, *"Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely,"* this is not simply imagery. This is grief. This is what it feels like when the future a people have counted on disappears. They are cut off from all they have known and trusted.

We may know something about that kind of dryness. Of course, it's not always as dramatic as exile. Sometimes, something shifts or breaks open. Something is taken from us or changed in ways we did not choose. Slowly, almost without noticing, something in us begins to feel dry and still.

So we come back to the question. *What is breathing through us?*

Because into that valley, God asks Ezekiel a question that feels almost impossible. *"Mortal, can these bones live?"* And Ezekiel does not pretend to know. He says, *"Lord, you know."* Because bones do not bring themselves back to life.

*And, frankly, neither do we.*

The very first thing God does with humanity is breathe. Before there are commandments or failure, before anything goes wrong, there is this quiet, intimate moment. God leans down into the dust and breathes. What was dust becomes life.

*(I feel like this notion of God's lifegiving breath has been the theme for us this Lent.)*

Which should make us wonder if the most important, wild, and precious thing about us is not what we have done, *but what and who has been breathing into us all along.*

Because we have been taught, many of us, by the Church, that the truest thing about us is our brokenness. That we are defined first by our sin, by what our collect today calls *"our unruly wills and affections"*. And, of course, there is truth there. We know how easily we fall into fear, into defensiveness, into habits that do not give life.

But we wonder if even that story in the garden has been misunderstood. What if it was not a fall so much as a stumble? Not a moment that defined us forever, but a moment that revealed something tender and unfinished about being human. A moment when fear entered the picture. When trust became harder. When we began to hide.

And even there, God does not take back the breath. God does not withdraw the Spirit. The story does not end with failure. It continues with relationship.

Which means the truest thing about us is not that we stumble. The truest thing about us is that we are still being breathed into.

And yet, so often, we forget that truth. We forget what gives us life, and when we do, we fall back on other things to move us.

Fear is often the quickest to enter. Fear is efficient. It rises up before we even know what is happening. It tells us to protect, to close off, to hold on tightly. And fear is real. It is part of being human. But we cannot be defined by our fear.

So we wonder again. *Where do you feel your life flow originates?*

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, talks about life in the Spirit. And it can sound abstract until we begin to notice it in our own lives.

Life in the Spirit looks like the moment when we pause rather than react. It looks like compassion showing up where judgment would have been easier. It looks like staying present when everything in us wants to turn away.

And it is not about becoming different people overnight. It is about something different moving through us. It is about living from the Spirit of Christ.

Jesus stands at his friend's tomb and weeps. Which matters, because whatever this life in the Spirit is, it does not remove us from grief. It does not make us immune to loss or sorrow.

And then Jesus does the unimaginable. (think back to Ezekiel, "can these bones live?" Lord, you know.") Jesus calls, "*Lazarus, come out*". And Lazarus does. But not in the way we might expect. He comes out still wrapped in grave clothes, still bound, alive but not yet free.

And Jesus turns to the people around him and says, "*Unbind him, and let him go.*" Which tells us that being brought to life is not the end of the story. It is the beginning.

We are people who have heard our name called out of whatever has held us, and we are still learning how to live as people who are free. Still learning how to let go of what binds us. Still learning how to live from that deeper breath.

And we do not do that alone. Sometimes we are the ones stepping out of the tomb, still tangled up in things we do not quite know how to release. And sometimes we are the ones standing nearby, invited to help unbind someone else, gently and patiently, and with love.

So, again, we return to the question. *What is giving your life breath?*

Because we will all be shaped by something. We will be moved by something. And the invitation of this season is not to try harder to be better, but to notice where we are dry, where God is still breathing life.

Because the voice of God has spoken only once, a long time ago. It continues to call. Into valleys of dry bones. Into sealed tombs. Into hearts that have grown tired or guarded or afraid.

And the voice says, "*Come out. Come back to life. Come back to the breath that has always been there.*"

So maybe this week the invitation is simple.

Pay attention. Notice what is alive in you. Notice what is opening, what is softening, and what is drawing you toward connection rather than away from it. And let us notice, too, what pulls us back into fear, into tightness, into that sense of being closed off.

Because the Spirit of Christ is not waiting for us to fix ourselves. The Spirit of Christ is already at work within us, breathing, moving, calling. And that breath is stronger than whatever has gone still, stronger than whatever has bound us, stronger even than the fear that tries to define us.

We have been given this one wild and precious life.

And even now, we are feeling the breath of God.

Amen.