Ezekiel 37:1-14

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.

2 He led me all round them;
there were very many lying in the valley,
and they were very dry.

3 He said to me,
'Mortal, can these bones live?'

I answered,
'O Lord GOD, you know.'

4 Then he said to me,
'Prophesy to these bones,
and say to them:

O dry bones,
hear the word of the LORD.

5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones:
I will cause breath to enter you,
and you shall live.

6 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.'

7 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.

8 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.

9 Then he said to me,
'Prophesy to the breath,
prophesy, 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.'

10 I prophesied as he commanded me,
and the breath came into them,
and they lived,
and stood on their feet,
a vast multitude.

11 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."

[12]Therefore prophesy,
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.

[13]And you shall know
that I am the Lord,
when I open your graves,
and bring you up from your graves,
O my people.

[14]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.

Reading the Prophet This Week

Think of Ezekiel as a PTSD survivor, displaced person,
Among a first generations of exiles in Babylon, a temple priest,
his words edited by tradition, here and in Talmud

It comes up next Friday in 'Not Ready to Read', as in 2008:
http://www.hereticslikeus.com/2008/04/ezekiel-post-traumatic-stress-syndromw.html?q=Ezekiel

This vision is of a valley of dry bones
an exchange between prophet and God,
then reassembly and resurrection

How is it the same or different from our creation myths?
This is not one hu-man, split to _-man and wo-man
It's a multitude, a nation

Our popular culture offers us zombies and vampires,
as Babylon provided alternative universes –
Everything everywhere, all at once

So what's Ezekiel's description, diagnosis – and ours?
What's Ezekiel's divine prescription, treatment, and ours?
Is this an appealing vision?

If you skimmed the opening of the book,
you'd get wilder visions, and street theatre acting out despair
what's next in c38-40 is apocalyptic war of Gog and Magog

Only at the end will we get 'build back better' visions,
of a new temple, new tribal allotments in Palestine
today, it's simply a rattling of dry bones, raised

What good is that to us,
individually and collectively as a people -
or to humanity universally?

John 11:1-45

Now a certain man was ill,
Lazarus
of Bethany,
the village of Mary
and her sister Martha.

2 Mary was the one
who anointed the Lord with perfume
and wiped his feet with her hair;
her brother Lazarus was ill.

3 So the sisters sent a message to Jesus,
'Lord, he whom you love is ill.'

4 But when Jesus heard it, he said,
'This illness does not lead to death;
rather it is for God's glory,
so that the Son of God
may be glorified
through it.'

5 Accordingly,
though Jesus loved Martha
and her sister and Lazarus,
6 after having heard
that Lazarus was ill,
he stayed two days longer
in the place where he was.

7 Then after this
he said to the disciples,
'Let us go to Judea again.'

8 The disciples said to him,
'Rabbi,
the Judeans were just now trying to stone you,
and are you going there again?'

9 Jesus answered,
'Are there not twelve hours of daylight?

Those who walk during the day do not stumble,
because they see the light of this world.

10 But those who walk at night stumble,
because the light is not in them.'

11 After saying this, he told them,
'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep,
but I am going there to awaken him.'

12 The disciples said to him,
'Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.'

13 Jesus, however,
had been speaking about his death,
but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep.

14 Then Jesus told them plainly,
'Lazarus is dead.

15 For your sake
I am glad I was not there,
so that you may believe.
But let us go to him.'

16 Thomas, who was called the Twin,
said to his fellow-disciples,
'Let us also go,
that we may die with him.'

17 When Jesus arrived,
he found
that Lazarus had already been in the tomb
for four days.

[18]Now Bethany was near Jerusalem,
some two miles away,
[19]and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary
to console them about their brother.

[20]When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,
she went and met him,
while Mary stayed at home.

[21]Martha said to Jesus,
'Lord, if you had been here,
my brother would not have died.

[22]But even now I know
that God will give you
whatever you ask of him.'

[23]Jesus said to her,
'Your brother will rise again.'

[24]Martha said to him,
'I know that he will rise again
in the resurrection on the last day.'

[25]Jesus said to her,
'I am the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me,
even though they die,
will live,
[26]and everyone who lives and believes in me
will never die.
Do you believe this?

' [27]She said to him,
'Yes, Lord,
I believe that you are the Messiah,
the Son of God,
the one coming into the world.'

28 When she had said this,
she went back and called her sister Mary,
and told her privately,
'The Teacher is here
and is calling for you.'

[29]And when she heard it,
she got up quickly
and went to him.

[30]Now Jesus had not yet come to the village,
but was still at the place
where Martha had met him.

[31]The Judeans
who were with her
in the house,
consoling her,
saw Mary get up quickly
and go out.

They followed her
because they thought
that she was going to the tomb
to weep there.

[32]When Mary came where Jesus was
and saw him,
she knelt at his feet
and said to him,

'Lord,
if you had been here,
my brother would not have died.'

[33]When Jesus saw her weeping,
and the Judeans who came with her also weeping,
he was greatly disturbed in spirit
and deeply moved.

[34]He said,
'Where have you laid him?'

They said to him,
'Lord, come and see.'

[35]Jesus began to weep.

[36]So the Jews said,
'See how he loved him!'

[37]But some of them said,
'Could not he
who opened the eyes of the blind man
have kept this man from dying?'

38 Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed,
came to the tomb.

It was a cave,
and a stone was lying against it.

[39]Jesus said,
'Take away the stone.'

Martha,
the sister of the dead man,
said to him,
'Lord, already there is a stench
because he has been dead for four days.'

[40]Jesus said to her,
'Did I not tell you
that if you believed,
you would see
the glory of God?'

[41]So they took away the stone.

And Jesus looked upwards
and said,
'Father,
I thank you for having heard me.

[42]I knew
that you always hear me,
but I have said this
for the sake of the crowd
standing here,
so that
they may believe
that you sent me.'

[43]When he had said this,
he cried with a loud voice,
'Lazarus, come out!'

[44]The dead man came out,
his hands and feet bound
with strips of cloth,
and his face wrapped
in a cloth.

Jesus said to them,
'Unbind him,
and let him go.'

45 Many of the Jews therefore,
who had come with Mary
and had seen what Jesus did,
believed in him.

Reading the Gospel this Week

Chapter 11, raising Lazarus, is the pivotal centre of John
From c1 prologue a 'book of 7 signs' culminates this big sign
After this, we're heading toward the Passion

The Fourth Gospel places Lazarus in Bethany
with Mary and Martha his sisters, from other stories
too often conflated with other 'Mary' stories

If you only had this story as script for your 'movie',
What's your first scene, Jesus receiving Lazarus news?
What does he say to disciples, and do in response?

What's your second scene, Jesus proposing to go?
How do disciples respond, and Jesus clarify/amplify?

What's your third scene, Martha confronting Jesus on the way?
Do you recognize their words in exchange?

What's your fourth scene, Mary coming the Jesus in turn?
She says the same words as Martha – what's different,
including responses by Judean friends of Mary?

What's your fifth scene, Jesus at the grave of Lazarus?
What happens in your movie?

Again, the fourth gospel presents a longer-form,
not simply a post-it note, slogan, tweet, puzzle piece
What do you take away, for the next funeral echoing it?

Apart from funerals, if I preach this (not this year), notes are:
2020 (3 years ago in Lent):
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2020/03/if-you-had-been-here.html?q=Lazarus
2002 (21 years ago in Easter):
http://www.billbrucewords.com/2002/04/marthas-jesus.html?q=Lazarus