

“LEGOS AND BONES”

**A SERMON BASED ON THE OLD TESTAMENT
PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL (37:1-14) AND
PRESENTED FOR ORLEAN UMC ON MARCH 29,
2020-----THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT**

LEGOS.....YES LEGOS....YOU KNOW

LEGOS.....YOUR KIDS OR GRANDKIDS

PROBABLY PLAYED AND CREATED WITH

THEM.....AND MAYBE EVEN YOU HAVE BUILT A

TOWER OR TRUCK OR TRAIN OR TOWN OR TWO

IN YOUR TIME

LEGOS BEGAN IN A CARPENTER’S WORKSHOP

IN DENMARK IN 1949 WITH TOY BRICKS THAT

CAN BE CONSTUCTED AND TAKEN APART OVER

AND OVER AND OVER AGAIN....

**AS OF 2015 THAT BASE HAS BEEN EXPANDED TO
INCLUDE
MOVIES....GAMES....COMPETITIONS.....AND SIX
LEGOLAND AMUSEMENT PARKS.....ALSO AS OF
2015.....600 BILLION LEGO PARTS HAD BEEN
PRODUCED.....CORPORATLY----- LEGO HAS BEEN
DESIGNATED AS THE “WORLD’S MOST
POWERFUL BRAND”**

**WELL.....SINCE AROUND 2000 LEGO GROUP HAS
BEEN PROMOTING “LEGO SERIOUS PLAY”----- A
FORM OF BUSINESS CONSULTANCY FOSTERING
CREATIVE THINKING-----**

**IN WHICH TEAM MEMBERS BUILD METAPHORS
OF THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITIES AND
EXPERIENCE USING LEGO BRICKS-----**

**PARTICIPANTS WORK THROUGH IMAGINARY
SCENARIOS USING VISUAL DIMENSIONAL LEGO
CONSTRUCTIONS ----IMAGINATIVELY EXPLORING
POSSIBILITIES IN A SERIOUS FORM OF PLAY**

SERIOUS PLAY.

**YES-----THAT'S WHAT A NUMBER OF EXECUTIVES
ARE DOING THESE DAYS..... THEY'RE PLAYING
AT WORK, IN AN ATTEMPT TO PULL THEIR
CORPORATIONS OUT OF SLUMPS AND
SCANDALS.**

WHAT LEGO CONSULTANTS PROVIDE, FOR A FEE OF \$7,000, ----IN 2015 DOLLARS -----IS A TWO-DAY WORKSHOP IN WHICH PLASTIC BRICKS ARE USED TO BUILD “METAPHORICAL ABSTRACTIONS” OF VARIOUS BUSINESS CHALLENGES.

FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOUR BOSS IS CRUSHING THE SPIRITS OF EVERYONE IN YOUR COMPANY, MAYBE YOUR LEGO CREATION WOULD BE AN ENORMOUS BOSS FIGURE SMASHING A COLLECTION OF TINY PEOPLE.

THAT’S A PICTURE OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR WORKPLACE.

IT'S A SIMPLE PICTURE, YES — BUT SINCE THE WORKSHOP COSTS \$7,000, IT HAS TO BE CALLED A “METAPHORICAL ABSTRACTION.”

ACCORDING TO *THE ECONOMIST* MAGAZINE, THESE WORKSHOPS ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN 25 COUNTRIES, AND BUSINESS IS BOOMING. THE RESULTS ARE REVEALING, BUT THEY CAN DEFINITELY BE EMBARRASSING — ESPECIALLY FOR SENIOR MANAGERS..... A FIRM WITH ROTTEN CUSTOMER RELATIONS WAS MODELED AS A FORT UNDER SIEGE..... AND AN OVERBEARING BOSS DEPICTED HIS STAFF AS SOLDIERS WHO WERE HEADING INTO BATTLE.

**THESE LEGO CREATIONS CAN PROVIDE A
PICTURE OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT PEOPLE
HAVE TROUBLE SEEING IN ANY OTHER WAY.
THIS KIND OF SERIOUS PLAY UNLOCKS
UNDERSTANDINGS THAT MIGHT REMAIN HIDDEN
IN NORMAL BUSINESS MEETINGS.**

**LEGOS SHOW THE BARE BONES OF A DIFFICULT
SITUATION, ONE THAT CAN BE UNDERSTOOD
AND THEN IMPROVED.**

THE PROPHET EZEKIEL WAS CALLED BY GOD TO DO SOME SERIOUS PLAY WHEN THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL WERE TRAPPED IN EXILE IN BABYLON. THEY WERE FAR FROM HOME, FEELING HOPELESS AND LOST, DRIED UP AND DEPRESSED..... IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS SPIRIT-DRAINING SITUATION, THE HAND OF THE LORD COMES UPON EZEKIEL AND GIVES HIM A VISION OF A VALLEY FULL OF BONES.

DRY BONES. BLEACHED BONES. DEAD, DISGUSTING, DISORGANIZED, DISCONNECTED AND DESICCATED BONES.... BONES THAT ARE COMPLETELY LIFELESS, BUT MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO ILLUSTRATE SOMETHING IMPORTANT.

**“MORTAL, CAN THESE BONES LIVE?” GOD ASKS
THE PROPHET**

**YOU CAN IMAGINE THAT THERE IS COMPLETE
SILENCE AT THIS POINT, WITH EZEKIEL
WONDERING, “IS THIS A TRICK QUESTION, OR
WHAT?” DRY, DEAD, DISCONNECTED,
DESICCATED BONES — CAN THEY LIVE? IT WAS
LIKE LOOKING AT A TUB OF LEGOS, AND ASKING
IF THESE BUILDING BLOCKS CAN COME TO LIFE.**

**BUT EZEKIEL KNOWS THE UNLIMITED AND
UNPREDICTABLE POWER OF THE ONE LORD
GOD, SO HE’S NOT GOING TO BLURT OUT THE
FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND.**

**HE SAYS, QUITE DIPLOMATICALLY, “O LORD
GOD, YOU KNOW”**

**“PROPHECY TO THESE BONES,” COMMANDS THE
LORD; “SAY TO THEM: O DRY BONES, HEAR THE
WORD OF THE LORD. THUS SAYS THE LORD GOD
TO THESE BONES: I WILL CAUSE BREATH 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”**

EZEKIEL DOESN'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN, BUT HE'S UP FOR SOME SERIOUS PLAY.....SO HE PROPHESES TO THE BONES, AND SUDDENLY THEY BEGIN TO CLICK TOGETHER, LIKE SO MANY LEGO BUILDING BLOCKS. THE FOOT BONE CONNECTS TO THE LEG BONE, THE LEG BONE CONNECTS TO THE HIP BONE ... YOU KNOW THE SONG ... AND THEN SINEWS APPEAR, FOLLOWED BY FLESH AND SKIN. BUT THERE IS STILL NO BREATH IN THEM.

SO GOD SAYS, "PROPHECY TO THE BREATH ... COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH, AND BREATHE UPON THESE SLAIN, THAT THEY MAY LIVE."

**SO EZEKIEL PROPHESES AS GOD HAS
COMMANDED HIM, AND THE BREATH COMES
INTO THEM, AND THEY COME TO LIFE — A VAST
MULTITUDE OF LIVING PEOPLE.**

**THIS IS SERIOUS PLAY.....INDEED.....VERY
SERIOUS PLAY**

**BUT WHAT DOES THIS VISION MEAN? IT'S LIKE
ONE OF THE “METAPHORICAL ABSTRACTIONS”
BEING CREATED IN A LEGO WORKSHOP..... GOD
IS QUICK TO INTERPRET THE VISION FOR US,
SAYING TO EZEKIEL,**

“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’”

THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ARE FEELING DEAD AND DRIED UP, DEFEATED AND SCATTERED, AS THEY WASTE AWAY IN EXILE..... BUT GOD HASN'T FORGOTTEN THEM, AND HE PROMISES TO OPEN THEIR GRAVES AND BRING THEM BACK TO THEIR HOMELAND. “I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU, AND YOU SHALL LIVE,” PROMISES THE LORD, “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”

THE KEY IS GOD’S SPIRIT — AN AWESOME, LIFE-GIVING POWER THAT CAN BRING HOPE TO THE HOPELESS AND LIFE TO THE MOST DISCONNECTED AND DESICCATED OF BONES. THIS IS THE SPIRIT THAT EZEKIEL CALLS UPON WHEN HE SAYS, “COME FROM THE FOUR WINDS, O BREATH, AND BREATHE UPON THESE SLAIN” — IN THE ORIGINAL HEBREW, THE EXACT SAME WORD IS USED FOR WIND, BREATH AND SPIRIT. THIS IS THE SPIRIT THAT BRINGS THE DEAD TO LIFE, BECAUSE IT IS THE WIND-BREATH-SPIRIT OF GOD THAT FILLS THE DEAD BODIES AND CAUSES THEM TO STAND ON THEIR FEET, “A VAST MULTITUDE.”

SO THE ANSWER TO GOD'S ORIGINAL QUESTION TO EZEKIEL IS REALLY QUITE SIMPLE. "MORTAL, CAN THESE BONES LIVE?" YES, IF THEY'RE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

THE VERY SAME IS TRUE FOR US. TODAY'S PASSAGE IS NOT AN EXCERPT FROM A PROPHETIC SELF-HELP BOOK, ONE WHICH INSTRUCTS US TO REFORM, REINVENT OR REORGANIZE OURSELVES INTO A MORE EFFICIENT OR EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION.

**NO, IT'S A PASSAGE THAT CHALLENGES US TO
OPEN OURSELVES TO THE LIFE-GIVING POWER
OF GOD'S SPIRIT, A HOLY SPIRIT THAT COMES
TO US FOR ONE PURPOSE ONLY: SO THAT WE
WILL KNOW THAT GOD IS THE LORD.**

**THAT'S WHY GOD GIVES LIFE TO THE BONES: SO
THAT THEY WILL KNOW THAT GOD IS GOD.**

**THAT'S WHY GOD BRINGS THE PEOPLE OF
ISRAEL TO THEIR HOMELAND: SO THAT THEY
WILL KNOW THAT GOD WILL ACT.**

**THAT'S WHY GOD GIVES A CHILD TO SENIOR
CITIZENS NAMED ABRAHAM AND SARAH: SO
THAT THEY WILL KNOW THAT NOTHING IS TOO
WONDERFUL FOR THE LORD (GENESIS 18:14).**

**THAT'S WHY GOD GIVES A SON TO A VIRGIN
NAMED MARY: SO THAT SHE WILL KNOW THAT
NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD (LUKE 1:37).**

**THAT'S WHY GOD FILLS US WITH HIS LIFE-GIVING
SPIRIT: SO THAT WE WILL KNOW THAT GOD IS
ALIVE AND WELL AND ACTIVE — RIGHT HERE,
RIGHT NOW.**

***AT THE HEART OF THIS PASSAGE FROM EZEKIEL
IS THE MESSAGE “GOD IS ABLE.” FOR EXAMPLE:***

- ***WHEN WE ARE LOST, GOD’S ABLE TO FIND US.***
- ***WHEN WE’RE CRUSHED BY GUILT, GOD’S ABLE
TO LIFT THIS BURDEN.***
- ***WHEN WE’RE WITHOUT VISION, GOD’S ABLE TO
INSPIRE US.***
- ***WHEN WE’RE OVERWHELMED, GOD’S ABLE TO
CALM US.***

**• WHEN WE'RE ATTACKED, GOD'S ABLE TO
DELIVER US.**

**• WHEN WE'RE FEELING DISCONNECTED,
DESICCATED AND DISCOURAGED, GOD'S ABLE
TO RECONNECT US, REFRESH US AND REVIVE
US.**

**• WHEN WE ARE ISOLATED ----AFRAID----EVEN
QUARANTINED....EVEN FACING HEAD ON A
MONSTROUS PANDEMIC THAT THREATENS
THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE...GOD IS
THERE TO ASSURE AND COMFORT US...TO
BRING US PEACE**

GOD CAN TAKE DEATH ITSELF, AND
TRANSFORM IT INTO LIFE. GOD IS ABLE.

**WHAT DO THESE LEGOS — THESE DRY
BONES — TELL US ABOUT WHO WE ARE AS
A CONGREGATION?**

**WHERE DO WE NEED THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO
BE AT WORK AMONG US?**

**WHAT WILL NEW LIFE LOOK LIKE, AFTER WE
OPEN OURSELVES TO THE POWER OF THE
SPIRIT?**

**GOD SAYS TO EZEKIEL, “MORTAL, THESE
BONES ARE THE WHOLE HOUSE OF ISRAEL.”**

**LET US --- FOR A MOMENT ---- VISUALIZE THESE
LEGOS AS THE WHOLE CONGREGATION OF THIS
CHURCH.**

**WHEN OUR BONES ARE DRIED UP, OUR LEGOS
ARE SCATTERED, OUR HOPE IS LOST, AND WE
ARE FEELING COMPLETELY CUT OFF, AT THAT
PRECISE MOMENT THE CHALLENGE FOR US IS
TO TURN TO GOD AND ASK HIM TO FILL US WITH
HIS SPIRIT.**

**THE PROMISE IS THAT GOD WILL PUT HIS SPIRIT
WITHIN US AND WE WILL LIVE, AND THEN WE
WILL KNOW THAT THE LORD HAS SPOKEN AND
WILL ACT.**

**GOD CAN BRING LIFE TO LEGOS, TO BONES AND
TO US. GOD IS ABLE.**

**PRAISE GOD AND MAY IT BE SO FOR YOU AND
FOR ME.....AMEN.....**