



When the Advocate comes, Jesus promises, you will know the truth. When the Spirit comes, he will guide you into all truth. And, knowing the truth, you are to testify to the truth. A reminder once again that we are always connected to God. We are never alone. Someone – the Advocate or the Holy Spirit, whichever name is most comfortable to you, the Advocate or the Holy Spirit– is at our side working with us and for us.

The word advocate has many connotations. From Merriam Webster<sup>1</sup>, an advocate is:

- one who pleads the cause of another; *specifically* one who pleads the cause of another before a tribunal or judicial court
- one who defends or maintains a cause or proposal; e.g. an *advocate* of liberal arts education
- one who supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group; e.g. a consumer *advocate*; an *advocate* for health

The Advocate in the Gospel today is the Holy Spirit- the third person of the Trinity, the manifestation of God that is active in our world today. The breath of God, the breath of life breathed into the dust of the earth, from which we were formed.

We are not passive recipients of the blessing of the Holy Spirit. We are told by Jesus that once we know the Holy Spirit, once we know the truth of God, we are to testify to the truth. What form that testimony takes is going to vary among us depending upon our gifts and talents. But each of us is expected to testify to the truth as we have learned it from the Advocate. We, having learned the truth of God, become advocates ourselves.

We have an example of this expectation of God to us in the reading from Ezekiel – and no, I'm not going to sing this morning!

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, "Prophesy 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 to enter you, and you shall live.

"O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord." The Mortal is an advocate at God's direction, speaking the truth of God's love and power. Brother Curtis Almquist<sup>2</sup> puts it this way:

Your past, whatever it is, will provide the firm foundation for your life. Even if there's rubble, the rubble will be reformed into an edifice far stronger and more beautiful than you could have ever imagined.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocate> (May 19, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ssje.org/2009/07/07/wrestling-with-god-2/> (May 19, 2018)

When we reflect on the story of the dry bones and re-emergence of those bones into full and functioning life through the Mortal acting as advocate, we may remember times in our own life when things were not going well. You've crashed and burned and feel like the dry bones in the valley of despair.

Almquist offers these thoughts for us to ponder today:

You probably have not deserved *your* life. Life is not fair, often in two ways: the blessings and the wounds. You have likely been the recipient of countless blessings, and from your earliest days. .... If your life in any way parallels mine, you can lay claim on many blessings in life, far beyond what you could have asked for or deserved. ... You may have the experience of your broken past not only being forgiven but in some way redeemed. It's actually being put to good use, and to God's glory. Your insight, care, or sensitivity, or compassion, or generosity, or humility which may be *so* evident to other people has come out of your broken past. If they only knew what you know. God knows. Jesus has promised to seek and save the lost, which may apply to some part of your own past, where *you* were lost and are now found. And that is a wonderful thing.

If you still have something dark in your past that is sealed up in the dungeon of your memory, then risk opening up the prison door. Of course, it's not this piece of your history that is walled off; it's you who are walled in, not free, not fully alive. You might even need some help from someone to open up what is sealed shut from a dark chapter of your past, but it's worth it. *You're* worth it. The most amazing thing happens when that door of shame is opened. Light comes in! It's no longer a dark secret; it's actually the secret of your life that is first your breaking and then your making. ... A blessing in life is something that everyone wants. A blessing is the assurance of wellbeing, a promise of provision, your sense of being "the apple of God's eye," of having a place in God's heart.

The Advocate promised by Jesus is the one who blesses us with a constant presence. And, at the same time, the Advocate is the one who challenges us to know and to speak the truth. And in speaking the truth that God loves us and that God is always with us – good times and bad – perhaps we ourselves can come to believe it deep down in our bones, even when our bones lay dry and brittle on a barren dirt valley. "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." A life that is and has been and always will be blessed by God. A life that must share the truth of God's love through how we act and what we say. A life that advocates for others in the most positive meaning of that word. Go out these doors, filled with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will strengthen you and lead you in good times and in hard times. Do not be afraid. God, who through the prophesy of the Mortal caused those dry bones to shake, rattle and roll, and be reconnected, has life in store for you. Stand up. Stand tall. And know that you are loved. **Amen.**