I don’t know whether you remember that song ‘Dem Bones’ or the Skeleton Dance?

You know, the one that goes:

Toe bone connected to the foot bone

Foot bone connected to the heel bone

Heel bone connected to the ankle bone, etc. working it’s way up the body.

Now that song, or spiritual, is based on the story of the prophet Ezekiel’s encounter with the power of God, and a field of dry bones[[1]](#footnote-1).

The verse, like an earworm, came into my head while I thought about our readings this morning.

St. Paul, writing to a church that was prone to division in the Corinthians, is trying to drive home his point about what the Church – the body of Christ – is.

Even if we are not experiencing the same level of conflict within our own church community – it does no harm to take note of his writing – because it’s got a lot of depth.

By the fact we read it, we are connected to it – like the toe-bone to the foot bone, foot bone to the heel bone, etc.

St Paul uses the image of a human body. He tells the Corinthians about body parts – hand, ear, eye, nose, feet, and head. Each has its special function. Different parts of a human body all make their contributions to the whole – and if one becomes ill, it can have serious consequences. Hence, we pray for each other, in the intercessions or at our Service of Wholeness on the last Sunday of the month.

So it is with each of us gathered here. As we consider what we are as the Church, we do well to remember this. Each of us can find a particular contribution to the Church, finding a ministry that suits us and complements the whole.

Be it clergy, lay reader, PCC member, Sunday Club leader, Choir member, Little Fishes volunteer, brass cleaner, flower arranger, couple with a wedding, baptism booker, faithful attendee or confused seeker (pick and mix/ add your own as appropriate) – you are part of the body of Christ.

And thank you to you for that – because you can make a difference that cannot be underestimated.

I remember a quote by motivational speaker Jana Stanfield that stuck with me: I cannot do all the good that the world needs. But the world needs all the good that I can do.

So, be encouraged this morning by being part of the Body of Christ, bones, organs, nerves (and those who get on them), and all.

But I’d like to pick up our gospel reading at this point – because while we may be the body of Christ, with our different parts, our gospel reading can give us the reason why we might choose to be part of such a thing.

Today’s gospel presents us with Jesus’ first act of public ministry, described for us in Luke’s gospel. Jesus is back in his home synagogue a short time after he chose to become a wandering teacher. It was probably quite a big day for everyone – a bit like a family re-union.

He is asked to read the lesson from the prophets. The choice is up to him. Instead of a book to flip through, a bulky scroll, covered in precious decorated fabric is brought to him and placed upon the lectern. Jesus unrolls it to a place near the end of the scroll. In a voice strong with anticipation, he reads aloud these words:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

Finished, Jesus rolls up the scroll, gives it back to the attendant, and takes his seat.

Now, the synagogue leader can invite any appropriate person to comment on the text for the benefit of the community. It was also customary for teachers to sit, rather than to stand, so when Jesus sits, everyone looks at him, expecting some commentary, on a text well known to many of them.

So, like Ezekiel and the dry bones, Jesus gives it a completely new and unexpected spin – breathing new life, new resolution, into the familiar words. In a sentence that remains provocative even now.

‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’.

By bringing new perspective to an ancient text, Jesus lets the lion out of the cage. And what is extra-ordinary is that, according to Luke, “Today” is the first word of Jesus’ public teaching. It’s not about what happened yesterday or what might happen tomorrow. It is about today.

Today. In your hearing.

As the body of Christ, the individuals that make up the whole - I wonder what you are hearing in those words this morning?

I know I’m guilty of this, but it sometimes too easy to miss today by fretting over yesterday and worrying about tomorrow. As a body, we fret over past scars and old wounds. Yet, somehow the presence of Christ – and his love for each of us - can heal the hurts of yesterday, and give us a vison for the future . Good news, release, sight, freedom, the Lord’s favour. We are given these words today to see the current context and circumstances of our lives in.

They are not just things Jesus says – but a re-telling of what God’s love is.

And just to finish off, I’d like you to take your bulletins and read these words together as Jesus read the old words from Isaiah and claimed them for his own. Please find the words, and repeat after me, sentence by sentence:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.

Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing. Amen.

1. Ezekiel 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)