

Column

“Can these bones live?” God asks Ezekiel as the Old Testament prophet looks out on a field of sun-bleached bones. “Bones”, as it turns out, refers to God’s covenant people who have been carried away captive. Humanly speaking their future is bleak, to say the least.

In response to God’s question, the prophet can only answer: “O Lord God, thou knowest” (37:3).

I found myself saying some similar when a woman who had just returned from a Christian conference stopped by my office this past week and asked if I thought a spiritual awakening would happen in this country.

Her question is certainly a timely one. After all, there are plenty of signs that a spiritual awakening is needed. Incidences of violence occur so frequently that we are no longer shocked by them. Entertainment, glitz and hedonism have become the face of America, even as God, the church and decency have receded further and further into the shadow of public life. Cynicism and distrust in the political process and those in positions of power – especially at the national level – increases daily. “Hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men,” to quote Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Will a spiritual awakening happen? Again, only God’s knows. A better question to ask might be: *Could* such a revival take place? The answer to this one is a resounding, yes!

As the years have passed, the power of God has not diminished. Unlike our own, His strength does not wane as the years go past. Just as He was able to cause a remnant of His ancient people to return from their captivity and eventually to bring out of this people a Saviour, so He is able to give this country a new birth.

Speaking of His power, the Apostle Paul calls Him the God who “quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were” (Romans 4:17). In other words, He is able to bring life out of death, as He did with cast-away Israel of old and later with the lifeless body of Jesus on Easter morning.

America needs rescue from the yoke of the enemy – not primarily an enemy without, but one within. Christian teaching and practices need to be brought back into family life; faith and loyalty into married life; integrity, honesty and

craftsmanship to industrial and commercial life; decency and trustfulness into public life, Christian faith and Christian values into national life.

But, how can such a revival come about? First, it will take a sovereign act of God's grace, but secondly it will only come with a revived church . . . a people resolved to turn from their waywardness and to pray and seek His face. The task is great, but God is greater. Take courage and go forward.

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favour and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honourable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogancy, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan is rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Blue Ridge.