

EAST GIPPSLAND

EASTER REFLECTIONS

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CAPE CONRAN

A REFLECTION ON EZEKIEL 37:1-14 – THE VALLEY OF DRY BONES

Recently I went for a walk along the beach in Cape Conran Coastal Park from where I was camping at a wild and beautiful place called Pearl Point.



There I came upon the carcass of a wallaby washed up on the sand – a very disturbing sight. It had been some time since the wallaby's death. There was no flesh left on its bones, its skeleton was held together by mummified sinews and skin with remnant tufts of fur. It lay in a contorted unnatural position with its chest cavity gaping open. Tangled among its bones were pieces of seaweed, and in the space where its organs would have been was a smoothly weathered stone. And when I looked more closely I saw that under its exposed ribs was a litter of burnt leaves and bits of charcoal. The smooth light yellow sand around the carcass was dotted with black specks of burnt forest.



I was on that beach about 6 weeks after fire scorched Cape Conran, and while Pearl Point was relatively untouched, I had driven through devastated scrubland to get there. I assume that this wallaby was a victim of that fire. I assume that it fled from the flames to the ocean and was drowned. Here on the beach was sad evidence of the horror that had unfolded upon all the creatures living in that place. How many more bodies are washing around in those waves?



The prophet Ezekiel sees a similar horror - a valley full of dry bones ([Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)). God asks the prophet, "Can these bones live?" The obvious answer is no. But God instructs the prophet to call them back to life. Ezekiel does, and they rise up with the breath of life in them. "These bones," God explains to the prophet, "represent the community of God's beloved people - those who say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.'"

I think of that wallaby. Can its bones live? No. But what of the hopeless loss that it represents? – the destruction wrought on lives and communities, human and more than human? Can that be turned around? Can the hope of new life arise from that place? God says, "Yes."

The coronavirus pandemic, falling on top of the ongoing bushfire recovery, is cutting us off from one another again. Our Easter will be disrupted this year - we won't be able to gather to celebrate God's promised hope of new life out of despair - that promise which Ezekiel points towards and Jesus embodies. But that does not make the promise any less real. Can these bones live? - the dry and burnt bones within me? - the bones of my hope, the bones of community connection, the bones of my familiar life?

God says, "Yes."



All photographs taken at Cape Conran on 14 & 15 March 2020. I did also photograph the wallaby carcass. If it would help you to see those images follow this link: adobe.ly/3bgFiFf