



Dem Dry Bones: Preaching, Death, and Hope

Luke A. Powery

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In an age when the so-called prosperity gospel holds sway in many Christian communities or the good news of Christ is reduced to feel-good bromides, it would seem that death has little place in contemporary preaching. Embracing the vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 as a metaphor for preaching in the Spirit, acclaimed homiletician Luke Powery asserts that death is the context for all preaching. In fact, the Spirit leads preachers to the context of death each Sunday in order to proclaim a word of life that ultimately breathes hope into people's lives. Yet many preachers avoid death because they are at a loss of what to say about it and do not realize its vital connection to the substance of Christian hope. As a result the church is too often left with sermons that are fundamentally devoid of hope.

Dem Dry Bones aims to remedy some of the theological and homiletical shortcomings in contemporary preaching by looking closely at the African American spirituals tradition, which Powery describes as "sung sermons" that embrace death. Thus, not only is death the context for preaching hope, but hope is generated by experiencing death through the Spirit who is the ultimate source of hope. Through this study, Powery demonstrates how to preach in the Spirit so that proclaiming death becomes an avenue toward hope. In short: no death, no hope.

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