



New Life in the Unlikeliest of Places
Ezekiel 37:1-14
04/28/2019

Main Point

Because Jesus is alive, it means the hope of life trumps the reality of death.

INTRODUCTION

**What's the most desolate place you've ever been to?
What was it like there? What were some of the challenges in being there?
What did it feel like emotionally to be in the middle of a place like that?**

When you find yourself in places like these, you realize how fragile life truly is. In such a place, it can seem like death is all around you. That must have been how the prophet Ezekiel felt when he had a vision of a valley of dry bones. But in the midst of this landscape of death, God showed Him that He was powerful enough to bring life. For us as Christians, the hope of life trumps the reality of death because we know that Jesus is alive.

UNDERSTANDING

| Have a volunteer read Ezekiel 37:1-11.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and He brought me out ^[a]by the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. ² He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry. ³ He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord ^[b]GOD, You know." ⁴ Again He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD.' ⁵ Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones, 'Behold, I will cause ^[c]breath to enter you that you may come to life. ⁶ I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow back on you, cover you with skin and put breath in you that you may come alive; and you will know that I am the LORD.'"

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a ^[d]noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, sinews were on them, and flesh grew and

skin covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9 Then He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.””’”10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they came to life and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

11 Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are [e]completely cut off.’

God has always been about resurrection. When Ezekiel received this vision, the people of Israel had walked away from God and were in the middle of experiencing exile from Him.

Quote from the sermon:

We are not to be surprised if living as Christians brings us to the place where we find we are at the end of our own resources, and that we are called to rely on the God who raises the dead.

- N. T. Wright

What sticks out to you the most about the description of the valley?

Why was this valley a good picture of the spiritual state of Israel when they were in exile?

This vision was not just about Israel’s national exile; it was also about a bigger spiritual exile that we are all a part of. In what sense were all of us exiled, or separated, from God?

Why is it essential that we recognize we all were once separated from God?

What happens if we don’t recognize it?

This valley was the picture of death. Not only was it filled with bones, but they were dry bones—completely devoid of life of any kind. Even though we might not recognize it, the Bible tells us that we are all dead in our sin, separated from God because of our sin. All of us are, in other words, living in the valley of dry bones; the valley represents our separation. Until we recognize this fact, then the resurrection of Jesus and what He offers us because of it won’t really mean much to us.

Read Romans 3:10-18 and Ephesians 2:1-3.

What similarities do you see between these verses and Ezekiel’s vision?

Why do you think Ezekiel responded the way he did to God’s question (v. 3)?

What does that mean about the solution to our spiritual separation from God?

When Ezekiel saw the picture of death, he knew that the only way the bones could live is if God did something miraculous. No matter how much those bones might have wanted to

live, they were powerless to change their condition. It's the same way with us; it's only through God's mercy and grace that the separation between us can be bridged.

Why is it important that Ezekiel spoke the Word of God over the dry bones before they started to live?

What is the Word of God that God uses to bring us to life?

Why must we believe and remember the resurrection of Jesus in order to have hope?

Sermon Notes

Have a volunteer to read Ezekiel 37:12-14

¹² Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. ¹³ Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. ¹⁴ I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.'

The same message is communicated through a slightly different picture. Instead of the bones being exposed, here they are buried in **graves**. The effect is the same; life is brought to that which was dead. As promised many times in other places (such as [Ezekiel 36:24](#) and [36:28](#)), this revival of Israel also included their restoration to the land. God would powerfully reveal Himself to Israel through this great work of revival and restoration to the land. The breath in the revived bones was more than the breath of human life; it was the **Spirit** of the living God. This is another way of expressing the great promise found in the previous chapter ([Ezekiel 36:27](#)).

Ultimately, this chapter teaches many principles of how God works in revival, and how God's servants should think and act relevant to such a mighty reviving work. If we put the modern servant of God in Ezekiel's place, we can make the following observations.

Read Ephesians 2:4-8. How is this life God brought to us like the life He brought into the valley of dry bones?

When Jesus Himself was in the valley of death, God the Father rolled the rock away from the front of Jesus' tomb and breathed life into His dry bones just as He did in this valley. This is God's message for us—the gospel. When we hear the good news, God breathes life into us as we believe. And as we are raised to life, just as Jesus was, we can know that the possibility of life trumps the reality of death not only for Jesus, but also for us.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-57. How is death pictured in these verses? Do you typically see death as an enemy? Why or why not?

How does the resurrection of Jesus change the way we view the reality of death?

Death is not the end for the Christian. Death was not part of God's original intent, but came about because of sin. Jesus beat back this last enemy on our behalf. Because He did, we no longer have anything to fear. Jesus took the punishment of death for us so that we could have true life in Him. Not only that, but if God is powerful enough to beat this enemy, to move that rock away from Jesus' tomb, then there really aren't any rocks in your life that He can't move.

Key Points:

- Faith is belief in action
- Restoration is a process
- God is still breathing life into His creation
- We get to breathe in the presence of God, to exhale the essence of God.

Sermon Notes

APPLICATION

Where are you in your spiritual journey? Have you truly crossed from being separated to being made alive in Christ? If not, what are some of the things that are holding you back?

If the message that brings life from death is the message of the gospel, who is one person in your sphere of influence who needs to hear this message? How are you going to remind yourself daily that Jesus is alive? What difference do you think that will make in your life?

What are some of the "big rocks" in your life right now? How can our group pray that God would move those rocks in the coming weeks?