

Dry Bones **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ezekiel begins our text telling us about an encounter he has with the Lord God. *The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"*

Ezekiel is reluctant to give the Lord God an answer. His eyes and his human experience tell him that it is impossible. But, with God, all things are possible. He has doubts, but this is God. So, he dodges the question, refusing to make a commitment one way or the others. He says, "O Lord God, you know."

Sounds like the same blunder Thomas makes on the night of our Lord's resurrection. Jesus appears to the disciples, He gives them the office of the keys, but Thomas is absent that night – he missed the church council meeting. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."

Thomas wants to believe, he really does. But, his human reason gets in the way. Can you imagine his thoughts? *How can this be? We watched as they nailed Him to the cross. They pierced His side, and blood and water poured out. His limp, dead, body was placed in the tomb. Yes, I want Him back badly – but I know what I saw, and people do not come back from the dead.* His heart screamed to believe, he wanted it to be true, but his human experience overwhelmed him, and he said to his friends who would never lie to him about such a thing, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Dry bones! Ezekiel is not simply looking over them, he is dry bones! Thomas is dry bones! That is what you and I are, dry bones scattered across the valley. Dry bones! Bones without life, bones that live in the valley of the shadow of death.

Can dry bones lives? You and I know have experienced enough of life to know the answer to that question. Dry bones, with no flesh or sinew or muscle on them are dead. There is no life in dry bones! God asks Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

Ezekiel answers, "O Lord God, you know."

Ezekiel returns God's question to Him, as if he were saying, "Give me an answer God." But God does not give Ezekiel an answer to his hidden query. He does not tell him whether these bones can live or not. Instead, God gives Ezekiel a command, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

God says, in simple laymen's terms, "Proclaim the word of the Lord to the bones Ezekiel. Stop doubting, but believe! I want you to take my Word out into the valley of the shadow of death. Proclaim my Word! My Word will accomplish the task for which I send it, it will give life to dry bones."

God does not suggest gimmicks or a slick advertising campaign, He just commands, proclaim my Word to them, "Hear the word of the Lord."

Dear friends in Christ, there are two messages for us here today. First, you are the dry bones – there was no life in you. It was the Word of the Lord that came to you and brought to you eternal life. Secondly, do not doubt the Word of the Lord, it can do marvelous things, it can work faith and grant eternal life. **You** are to take that Word with you into the valley of the dry bones, and proclaim it to others.

Look at what God works with, men like Ezekiel and Thomas, doubters. Look at what God has to work with, Rev. Martin Luther, Pastor Jerabek, missionary David Bush, and others, doubters – men who are afraid that their words are weak and inadequate to the holy and noble task God requires of them – dry bones – all of them.

Look at what God chooses to work with, sinners, dry bones.

The Word of the Lord came to Ezekiel and spoke to Him. Do you understand this? Before Christ took on human flesh, He was the Word of God, all things came into being because it was He who spoke. He still remains the Word of God. That Word is the Lord God who spoke to Ezekiel, and through that Word, the Spirit wrought faith in his doubting heart. The Word changed Ezekiel. The Word made him alive unto God in Christ Jesus, and Ezekiel prophesied.

The Word of the Lord was made flesh and made His dwelling among us. Men beheld His glory, and still they nailed Him to the tree. Upon the cross He suffered and died. Three days later He rose. Who could believe that God would do this? Who could understand why God would do this? Who could come to have faith in it?

On his own, Thomas could not! He had walked and talked with Jesus. He had followed Him as a disciple. He had lived, and breathed with Him. He had sat down at meal with Him. But he watched his Lord and Master, his beloved Teacher, cruelly put to death. When what his eyes had seen were confronted with the words of his friends, faith fled.

Christ appeared again to the disciples, Thomas was present. Jesus spoke, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus spoke, Thomas believed – the Word of God put flesh on dry bones.

God speaks to Ezekiel too, he tells him to say, "Hear the Word of the Lord." As he proclaims the Word, life come to dry bones.

That Spirit of God, at work in the Word that Ezekiel proclaims is the means by which God worked. It is by the Word of the Lord that God has always – and will always – continue to work. Wherever the Word of God is proclaimed, there dry bones will be brought to life. It is the Word of God which brings life to all those who are dead in trespasses and sins.

It is that Word which came to me and gave me new life – it was this Word which gives me the courage to speak that Word to you. My heart would quail and quake, "What good are my words, I am only a man, feeble of speech, a man of fumbling mouth, and abrasive personality. What good am I?"

God works through such men as Ezekiel, Thomas, and Todd in order that it is He who is at work. It is the Word made flesh which makes a difference – not the men. It is this Word of God which comes to you and gives you new life. The Word of the Lord was spoken, and in the water your sins were drowned, your old sinful flesh was crucified with Christ, and you were raised to a new life.

It is the Word of the Lord which is spoken over simple elements of bread and wine. The breath of the Lord comes upon them and bestows new life, the very life of Christ, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins.

There are days and times that we doubt. Our faith falters and wavers. But God promises that great things happen by the Word of the Lord. When we believe that we have failed or believe that the burdens of life are more than we can bear, the Spirit of the Lord delivers to us the strength of God in His Word. His Word gives new life and strength.

Missionary David Bush is with us today, he believes that the Word God who spoke to Ezekiel in our text, is here, and will use him to go Macau. He believes that the Word which He will bring to those people – the deaf, the sick, the hearing, and others – can bring life to them. The Word of God will bring life to the dry bones there, just as He is bringing life to dry bones here today.

God speaks to you through the pen of Ezekiel today. "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord."

You have been brought up – you have been given new life – you are new creatures in Christ Jesus. You live now and forevermore, for He who speaks to you, is He died and rose again for you. It is His life He gives to you now and forever more. Amen. He is risen!