

These dry bones can live again!
Ezekiel 37:1-14

Our passage this morning describes Ezekiel's vision of a valley full of death. Dry bones lay everywhere, symbolizing all that the people of Israel lost when their nation was destroyed and their leaders carried off into exile.

Yet, at the command of God, Ezekiel was called as a prophet to speak to the bones and the Spirit of God would bring the bones back into flesh. Then with another prophesy, the Spirit of God would pour life into the bodies.

I am not a certified CPR person, but I have been to a few health fairs where CPR sessions have been on the programme. For those who do CPR would probably know that how CPR was taught has changed over the years. Now, it is less about breathing into the person and more about the chest compressions.

But, I remember when I first saw the demonstration, a lot of emphasis was put on starting the process with two strong breaths into the dummy and then pumping the chest. With my predisposition to heart attack, I took serious interest.

It can be an overwhelming thought to consider the responsibility of breathing life into another person, knowing that their life could depend on my breath...that the air in my body could bring to life their **dry bones!**

Yet, we know that people do that every day and we have all heard incredible stories of lives being saved because another person used their breath to put life back into someone's lifeless body.

1. Have you ever felt like you were in a valley of dry bones, or worse yet, that you were one of the dry bones...you feel helpless and lifeless?
2. Or have you ever walked alongside another person; maybe a friend or family member, who was in their own season of valley of dry bones?

The valley of dry bones in our story represents people who feel separated from God. In essence they are dead without God; and God used the prophet Ezekiel to speak words of hope to the bones ...into their lives!

God asks Ezekiel, "Son of man, can these bones live again?" The question almost sounds rhetorical, and yet Ezekiel, a man who walks with God, answers with the only appropriate answer..." Lord God, only you know."

What that kind of response - "Lord God, only you know" - It is a faith response of someone who is walking with God and not rushing ahead or trying to fix things. **The response, "Lord God, only you know," is a response that shifts the attention from what we think we know - to what we know God knows.**

This valley of dry bones may be **familiar** to us:

1. It might be symbolic of our relationships, whether they are relationships between family or friends or couples, that may seem torn or shattered or beyond the possibility of new life.
2. It might be that this valley of dry bones represents relationships between peoples and races and nations and governments. There is much brokenness and bitterness in our histories and our stories, and it is difficult to see from where forgiveness or trust or reconciliation will come.
3. Or this dry bone valley might be symbolic of the body of Christ called the Church, whether our church denominations or our individual churches. We know that there is much division and differences theologically, politically and ministry wise within the body of Christ.
4. Or this valley of dry bones may represent a feeling of being in an empty and desolate season of your life.

But looking deeper in the passage we see something of encouragement!

Because it's important to remember that this vision is given to Ezekiel while he too was in exile.

The encouragement comes in knowing that when we experience exile in our personal lives; or our spiritual lives; or our church ...God can show up!

The scripture says, "The Lord God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bones and let them live."

No matter what the circumstances, God will breathe new life into us. We can take heart because God can turn the hostility and loneliness of exile into holy ground where we hear the word of God loud and clear and things around us begin to make sense again.

So, exile is not always a bad thing.

1. Exile can be the season for faithful face-to-face honest conversation.
2. Exile can be the season for purging and purifying.
3. Exile can be a time to go back to the fundamentals; back to the essentials; back to asking the basic, honest questions; the hard questions...questions that can no longer wait on the back burner.

Remember what happens to Ezekiel in exile...

1. His eyes are opened to see a new reality.
2. He glimpses that the kingdom of God is at hand.
3. His tongue is loosened so he can speak courageously of a new day coming.

For Ezekiel, new life for dry bones is proclaimed in the Word of God. God says, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, dry bones, hear the Lord's word!"

So dare to see a new possibility:

1. Dare to get excited about what can be.
2. Dare to think and speak and embrace the seemingly impossible.
3. Speak new life into your dry situations - and watch muscles, tendons, skin, breath, life, and faith come together.

So, Ezekiel preached to those dry bones;

1. he preached new life to those dry bones;
2. he preached possibility to those dry bones;
3. he preached faith to those dry bones.

Some might say he was wasting his breath.

We are not told how long he kept it up...whether minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years. It doesn't matter. You see, when we walk with God, we believe in God's presence, we continue to believe regardless of what is around us; regardless of current issues; regardless of how things appear. We continue to be faithful. Because being faithful is for the long haul.

And faith is not easy. Faith is not something we grab on the way out the door or pick up at the fast food drive through. Faith and believing are not for wimps.

But you know, dry bones will remain dry unless and until someone comes along to offer new life to the dry bones.

Not long ago, I was reading an article that had to do with the decline in membership of a particular church. In the article was an illustration that has stuck with me. It was a wonderful metaphor. It had to do with how ranchers often keep cattle. In some places, the writer said, ranchers keep cattle by building fences. If you build a good fence, your cattle will be on your side. You will know who is yours and who is not yours. And your job, of course, is to keep the fence mended, to make sure that the cattle do not leave, or don't go somewhere else. So you spend all your energy mending fences to keep your herd and your flock together.

But, the writer said, there are places like in the outback of Australia, where it is just too vast to build fences. So to keep the herd together, they dig wells...deep wells that hold cold, cold water. And as long as there is life-sustaining water nearby, the herd does not wander away; they do not leave. You don't have to spend your time mending fences; you spend your time digging wells with life-giving water.

So in the same way, if our focus is on God in all that we do and say, then our energy is in offering this life-sustaining water to give new life to dry bones. So, let's dig some wells.

We all have dry bones in our lives waiting to be restored...waiting to be given life giving water.

For some of you, I know your struggles are painful and difficult right now in your life.

1. You may feel like there are just too many dry bones to restore.
2. You feel like you are sitting in the midst of uncertainty, confusion and sadness, with no clear vision that new life will come.

For others, I don't know where in the valley you find yourself in this season of your life. But I do know that we are people who build our lives on the hope of resurrection. So, if you feel like your bones are dry and you don't know how when new life will ever come back into them; do not lose hope; be encouraged...Trust that God has not forgotten you and that new life will spring forth.

We serve a God of the Impossible

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD.

1. When Sarah was 90 years old and God told her that she would bear a son, He reminded her...**Gen 18:14**

Is there anything too hard for the LORD?...

2. God reminded Jeremiah... **Jer 32:27**

Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?

3. The angel Gabriel reminded Mary ...**Luke 1:37**

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

4. Jesus encouraged His disciples...**Matt 19:26**

...With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

Maybe as you hear this word this morning, there is some area of your life that you would describe as being a valley of dry bones.

Maybe you are going a tough season:

- 1) Maybe it's your marriage.
- 2) Your finances
- 3) Your dreams
- 4) Family Relationships
- 5) Your health

6) Your attitude

7) Your Faith and your Spiritual Journey

And you are asking the tough question - Can these bones live

- Trust God – because with God, nothing is impossible!