Can These Bones Live?
4/2/2017

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Ezekiel 37:1-14

The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2He led me all round them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?' I answered, 'O Lord GOD, you know.' 4Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath* to enter you, and you shall live. 6I will lay sinews on 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.' 7 So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath:* Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath,* and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.'10I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. 11 Then he said to me, 'Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely." 12Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel.13And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.'

1. Many Promises in the Bible

One of the things that many people overlook in the Bible is the promises from God. Do you know how many promises from God there are in the Bible? The total count varies based on how people count what is a promise. But just to give you a sense, there are people who have counted roughly 3,500 to 7,000 promises from God. Promises are one of the most important themes we find in the Bible. We divide the Bible into the New Testament and the Old Testament. But did you know that the word "testament" means

covenant, which means promise. Our Bible, which we look at as the word of God, is actually a book made of God's promises.

2. A Prophesy to Israel

In Ezekiel chapter 36, God makes a promise to the Israelites. God says in 36:10-11, [10]**and I will multiply your population, the whole house of Israel, all of it; the towns shall be inhabited and the waste places rebuilt;** [11]**and I will multiply human beings and animals upon you. They shall increase and be fruitful; and I will cause you to be inhabited as in your former times, and will do more good to you than ever before. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.**" During this time, the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon. The people of Israel were waiting for God's salvation. But as time went by, the people lost hope. One day, God directed the prophet Ezekiel to prophesy the rebirth of Israel. The promise seemed too good to be true. How could God's promise come true when Israel was in such a difficult situation? Israel had lost their land, their king, and their nation. The temple had been destroyed. The people were living divided and dispersed. Unification and restoration seemed impossible. And God knew that the Israelites may have doubted God's promise of restoration.

3. The Vision of the Dry Bones

In this context, God shows his power and ability to carry out his promises in Ezekiel 37. Ezekiel is in a vision, and God transports him by the Spirit to a valley full of dry bones. After the prophet walks all around these bones, God asks him a question: "**Son of man, can these bones live?**" (37:3). Ezekiel knows that, humanly speaking, it is impossible. He simply says, "**O Lord God, you know**" (37:3). Ezekiel doesn't say "yes" or "no," but gives the question back to God and tells God that only God can make something impossible happen. God then directs the prophet to prophesy to the bones. So, Ezekiel says to the bones. "**O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.** [5]**Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live**" (37:4-5). When Ezekiel gives this prophecy, a remarkable thing happened. The bones come together (v. 7), flesh develops, skin covers them (v. 8), breath enters them, and they stand up (v. 10). "Breath" (*ruach* in Hebrew) can be translated as "wind" or "spirit." Just as God breathed life into Adam at Creation, God showed that he would breathe life into the bones, and they would come to life. This was a truly amazing experience for Ezekiel.

Verses 11-14 explain that the dry bones symbolize the whole house of Israel living in captivity. Like unburied skeletons, the Israelites were in a state of living death. They thought their hope was gone, and that they were cut off forever from God. The surviving Israelites felt that their nation had died with no hope of resurrection. But the reviving of the dry bones signifies God's plan for Israel's future restoration. Putting "breath" by God's spirit into the bones meant that God would not only restore them physically but also spiritually.

4. God's Mighty Power

Is there anyone who needs such an amazing prophecy today? There are many people today living around us that might say that their hope is gone. Last year, I had one of the most difficult times of my life. Around April of last year, Won Park, an important member of my previous church was suddenly hospitalized. He was the SPRC chair, a co-district lay leader, and the head of our multicultural ministry. He was a key person in the church and the community. When Christine and I visited him in the intensive care unit, we thought that he had gotten pneumonia. But, we later learned that Won contracted a rare bacterial infection that was destroying his whole body. He was given a 20% chance of survival. The doctor warned his wife that another patient with a similar condition had recently passed.

Won stayed in the hospital for two and a half months. He lost 47 pounds and had many critical moments while in the hospital. Some of the church members fasted and prayed for him. At the time, I wasn't sure whether God would save Won or not. But then a true miracle happened. He began to recover and was discharged in the middle of June. Won came to church to worship on my last Sunday in June. The whole congregation was overwhelmed by God's grace. We learned that Won was the only person at Lawrence General Hospital who had survived the condition. My previous congregation and I saw God's reviving power in his recovery. And Won will join us on October 1 to share about God's amazing grace in his story.

5. The Meaning of this Vision

What does Ezekiel's vision mean for you and me? Who are the dry bones today? During the past week, I kept asking myself whether I was one of the dry bones. What about you? How do we know whether we are dry bones or not? Ezekiel 37:2 says the dry bones were just lying in the valley. Dry bones couldn't do anything. In this world, there are about 2.4 billion Christians. I

wonder whether these Christians bring hope and make any impact on the lives of others.

Have you ever heard about Christopher Duffley? He was born prematurely weighing in at less than two pounds and permanently blind along with other health problems, requiring a seven-month hospital stay. He didn't speak in full sentences until the first grade and was later diagnosed with autism. He was adopted at the age of 2 by his aunt and uncle who are devoted Christians. Despite many physical problems, Christopher's adopted parents did not lose hope. And as the years passed, they would discover that he displayed a tremendous gifting in music. He has sung the national anthem for many occasions. When he was born with blindness and autism, he would have been considered a poor handicapped baby. But when he began to use his musical gift from God, he was in high demand. While we listen to his favorite song, "Open the Eyes of My Heart," I hope we can find a way of using the gifts we have received from God.

6. Conclusion

In two weeks, we will celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. And although we take the time to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter, we really celebrate the resurrection every Sunday. Jesus' disciples and the early Christians were willing to and often died to proclaim the good news of Jesus' resurrection to people around the world. When they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, they came alive and became contagious followers of Jesus.

7. Application

Today's sermon title is "**Can These Bones Live?**" If God asks this question to you and me when we are in big trouble, how would we answer? Since God's promise seems to be impossible, will we say, "**O Lord God, you know**"? But as Jesus says in Matthew 19:27, we could say, "**with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible**." And we have to remember that God used Ezekiel as an instrument to revive the dry bones. In the same way, God wants us to speak to the people around us that may be in a dry bones season of their lives. I am sure that there may be someone who has been waiting for our invitation to the Easter celebration. Easter invitation cards are available on the table. Please take some of them and invite someone who is like a dry bone. God wants us to help them to have hope and have an exciting life. May the resurrection of Jesus Christ give us hope always, transform our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit, and help us make a big impact on the lives of others! Amen.