



St. Michael's Church  
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2019

EZEKIEL 37:1-14  
LUKE 1: 28-36

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

*HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE  
SERVANTS OF OTHERS.*

*TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,  
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,  
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.*

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It was the phone call no one ever wants to get..

one of those calls that stops you in your tracks and changes everything.

Last Friday evening, my sister called to tell me my mother was diagnosed with a cancer she had about 15 years ago...

A cancer back then that she fought bravely and beat...but now it was back...

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I don't know about you,

but often when I get a call like that my mind goes to assuming the worst in a "felt hopeless-----ness."

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A similar kind of hopelessness had invaded the heart of the:

- Craziest
- Wackiest prophet in the Bible.

A man named Ezekiel...a man facing hopeless times.

Why so hopeless?...

**For that I need to take you to back to King Solomon,**

**the man who received wisdom at an early age--**

**but because of horrible decisions, did not finish life well...**

**Solomon died 931 years before Christ.**

**But because he didn't finish life and Kingship well, two things happened:**

1. **There was a fight over who would succeed him**
2. **SECOND, Over this fighting-Israel would tragically divide into two countries**
  - Israel to the North
  - Judah to the South

Over the next 800 years, the sinful **legacy** of Solomon continues resulting in destruction for both countries.

- **200 years later in 722 bc, Israel is taken captive by the Assyrians**
- (remember time counts down until the birth of Jesus)
- **136 years after Israel falls...**
- **Judah in 586 is taken captive by the Babylonians**
- All the while God sends prophets to beg both nations to repent and return to Him-

but to no avail.

**One of those prophets sent by God is Ezekiel.**

Ezekiel starts his prophetic ministry from the hopeless place of 11 years before Judah is destroyed.

It was a doomsday scenario.

Ezekiel is doing everything to prevent Judah from being sacked--

begging people to repent.

Ezekiel's book is essentially his diary of life and visions God gave him during this hopeless-time-

Some scenes so horrifying that early rabbi's banned this book for anyone under age 30!

In chapter 6, Ezekiel hears from God these words:

*"Because of the idolatry of my people, I am about to bring war upon you,*

*I will kill your people in front of your idols, the place will be littered with corpses **and you will know I alone am God.**"*

Remember that vision for later, a vision that moves Ezekiel to do some crazy things! For instance:

- Ezekiel eats bread cooked over manure, showing that the Jews would have to eat *unclean-non-kosher-food* to survive.
- A chapter later he shaves his head and beard and divides his hair into '3' parts:
  - A third he puts into the center of a Jerusalem map, then burns it:
    - Representing the Jews who will die when the city is burned
  - Another third he scatters on the map and chops it with a sword,
    - Representing those killed in the vicinity
  - The final third he scatters to the wind
    - Representing those who survive...
- Later...Ezekiel lies on his left side for 390 days...
  - Representing one day for each year of Israel's sins
  - THEN...
- Ezekiel lies on his Right side for 40 days...
  - Representing Judah's 40 years of sins.

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*Interestingly, Ezekiel came from the priestly line of Zadok...*

*and actually this is where my name, Zadig.. comes from...*

*The tribe of Zadok....which makes Ezekiel my cousin. Yes my crazy UNCLE LARRY KIND OF cousin.*

*Now you know where I get my eccentricities!*

That brings us to today's Chapter 37, the vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones.

God finally gives Ezekiel good news.

God takes Ezekiel back to that earlier vision where he shows him all those corpses... ..

a battlefield of corpses where the Jews tried to put up resistance to the Babylonians and lost.

But through the Hopelessness....

And in the spirit of that classic band, "Bill Haley and the Comets"...

the bones all over the valley begin to:

- **Shake**
- **Rattle**
- **and roll...!**
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**Tendons, muscles, and skin begin erupting onto the dead bones, lacing them with humanity...**

**A wind sweeps into the valley blowing life into the mouths and nostrils of the newly formed bodies...**

**Then the bodies come to life, like going back to Genesis and witnessing breath coming into Adam and Eve for the first time!**

**God tells Ezekiel in no uncertain terms...:**

- **These bones represent the Whole House of Israel!**
- **I will cause you to rise again**
- **I will bring you back to the land of Israel! "**

## **Jaw-Dropping!**

What this vision means is that God is capable of reversing hopelessness...  
Our world's slide down toward darkness **can be** reversed!

God is saying I have the last word...The dead **CAN** and **WILL** live!

Many Jews even today see it as a prophecy of the Post-Holocaust creation of the modern state of Israel...

Bottom line: It means:

New life will come to:

- Dead Israel
- Dead Temples
- Dead Churches
- Dead Believers
- A Dead World
- And Dead hearts!

Nothing boring about the Old Testament!

**Now, In many ways: Ezekiel 37 continues in Luke Chapter 1..**

Follow me here..

**Ezekiel 37 continues in Luke Chapter 1..**

The Valley of the bones coming together—

**continuing** in the womb of Mary!

God sends Gabriel to Nazareth to give news to Mary that the bones and flesh of the Messiah **would come together in her womb!**

Yes, The Valley of the bones coming together in the womb of Mary!

Jesus given life, taking our sin upon Himself..that we might live forever!

It's why we sing relentlessly that Advent Hymn, "O Come Emmanuel..."

*O Come O come Emmanuel,  
and*

**ransom**

*captive...*  
*Israel...*

*that mourns in*

*lonely exile here*

*until the Son of God appear...*

***Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel***

***HAS COME TO THEE O' ISRAEL.***

DO YOU SEE!

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Hope out of hopelessness!

And I Know it's true because of something often overlooked in both stories.

'2' words mentioned in both Ezekiel and Luke...

Ezekiel 37:

God brought me out by the **Holy Spirit** of the Lord and said to me...Prophecy to the bones!

And God said to the bones..I will put my **Holy Spirit** in you...and YOU-WILL LIVE.

In Luke:

Mary, when given the news the bones of the Messiah are growing within her says

"How can this be? Angel Gabriel says:

"The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, the power of the Most High will overshadow you...

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD."

1. The Holy Spirit brings the bones to life in Ezekiel's valley..

2. In Luke, Jesus, the Son of God..

- Given
- bones
- Flesh
- and
- divinity

- Through the **Holy Spirit** to save us from our sins.

The power of the **Holy Spirit** is:

- Central in the creation story of Genesis 1
- The glue to Ezekiel 37
- Dominates the picture in Luke 1
- Called on 120 times elsewhere in Scripture

And Is our strength today!

The Holy Spirit works in accordance with the Will of God Under Scripture through Jesus to bring:

- New life to old bones!
- New Life now and eternally
- Forgiveness
- Healing
- And Revival!

**This means it's not in us to:**

- Save ourselves
- We can't save others
- We can't make dead bones live without the power of the Holy Spirit now or eternally.
- Our spiritual restoration,
- The saving restoration of others lay solely in the power of God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit...

Which is why we pray:

**Come Holy Spirit**  
**Come Holy Spirit**

Bring conversion to the:

- Hope-less areas of our lives
- Hope-less areas of our family lives
- Our community-nation-and world!

**Come Holy Spirit, bring life out of death.**

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But there's more..

Let me take you back one more time both to:

- Ezekiel's Valley
- and Mary's conversation with Gabriel.

Remember...

- All Ezekiel could see were dead corpses for as long as the eye could see.
- All Mary knew was that there was no physical way she could be pregnant with anyone, including the Savior the World!

Authentic hope as defined in Hebrews 11 is this:

Believing despite **SEEING** nothing that would give you hope.

Believing despite **SEEING** nothing.

Though **HE** sees no hope:

Through the Holy Spirit:

- Ezekiel prophecies over the Bones
  - They come to life

Though **SHE** sees no hope:

Through the Holy Spirit:

- Mary submits: "I am the Lord's servant; may it be as You have said."

**You see, You and I HAVE AUTHORITY**

- **TO DECLARE THE UNSEEN...**

- Authority to declare life out of dead bones.

THIS IS WHAT MAKES CHRISTIANITY SO POWERFUL!

In the words of Scholar E.L. Allen:

- The Holy Spirit brings to us the power to act as God's agents in the world
- To make history
- To change the face of things...

Ezekiel knew the bones were dead..

YET...

God asks him to prophesy over the bones and declare them alive!

“Shake your finger Ezekiel over these long dead bones and tell them to come to life!”

Ezekiel did!

We have that authority!

**I saw this play out in real time in India, we were praying over a woman possessed with evil.**

**Johnnie Corbett, taking a page out of Ezekiel-----**

**prays over her with authority...**

**Johnnie, Shaking his finger over her possessed body-**

**Prays in the Name of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, to bring her new life!**

**And she became a new and different person in front of our eyes.**

- Healed!
- And RESTORED!

WE HAVE AUTHORITY TO DECLARE THE UNSEEN!

THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN JESUS CHRIST...

WE CAN:

- Save the worst of sinners through repentance and forgiveness.....

- Bring the dead bones of those who do not know the Lord to life for an eternity..
- You may not see a sinless past in your life
  - Yet through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, you can be forgiven!
  - You can forgive others!
  - **Come Holy Spirit help me declare the unseen!**
- I don't see a cancer free body in my mother..
  - Yet through the Holy Spirit I'm called to breath the life of the Spirit into her!

She may be healed through it now, but regardless when she does breath her last, she will have healing forever with Jesus in Heaven.

- **Come Holy Spirit help me declare the unseen!**
- You may not see a pain free marriage
  - Yet through the Holy Spirit you are called to breathe the life of the Spirit into it!
- **Come HOLY SPIRIT AND BRING REVIVAL!**

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And this takes me back to the unforgettable image of The Rev. Dr. Peter Moore preaching here last Sunday.

Peter has a cancerous brain tumor, but even more painfully, has hip bones that need to be replaced, his hip-pain is off the charts. So before the 10:30 service last week,

we prayed through the Holy Spirit, and anointed Peter with oil that he would be healed-- that he would be able to climb these grand pulpit steps...

**You saw him preach with power...**

**one of the most beautiful visuals of my life...**

**Come Holy Spirit**

Because of Jesus, Hope-less-ness will never-ever have the last word.

## **YOU HAVE AUTHORITY-USE IT!**

Finally..one more proof:

In 2009 St. Michael's Church was asked by our Bishop to go down to the east side of Charleston,

to the rubble of what was St. John's Church on Hanover Street and bring it back to life.

The wife of the 7<sup>th</sup> Rector of St. Michael's, Sarah Dehon started that church in 1839...

Sarah would serve there for 19 years.

But in 1962, the church long in decline, shuts down.

It sits vacant until 2009...when St. Michael's is asked to help bring those dead bones to life.

With the partnerships of Brother Dallas, and several faithful St. Michaelites including:

- Tommy Kirkland
- Matt Hubbell
- Hallie Seibels
- Beth Stuckey
- Chris Moss
- and many others,

We began meeting in their former sanctuary that was then LITERALLY just a heap of rubble.

Through the Holy Spirit that rubble came to life:

- The church rebuilt!
- People came!
- And on October 12 of the following year, I preached from their brand new pulpit on this very Chapter of Ezekiel.

**DEAD BONES CAN LIVE!**

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Since that time, Brother Dallas retired as Rector.

Fast forward to last week.

I was attending a Rectors conference with Brother Dallas's successor,  
the new Rector of St. Johns, the Rev. Matthew Rivers----

A man who with his wife Henrietta is taking St. John's to yet another level of faith and health!

During one of our conference sessions I just looked over at Matthew...and in a flash

- Remembered the rubble
- Remembered all those meetings with St. Michaelites over there
- And how we wondered if those bones could live..

And there was Matthew-symbolizing the life and new day at St. John's...

In fact this very morning, Matthew will be baptizing 5 people!

Living Proof-

God is in the business of

bringing hope

out of hopelessness.

Hope will:

- always
- always
- always have the last word.

You and I, through the Holy Spirit, are agents of that hope.

**Come Holy Spirit**

Let us pray.