"Dead things Come Alive"

When my family and I moved to Texas over seven years ago the biggest thing I was concerned about was tornadoes. Growing up in Southern California we never had to worry about these. In fact, I heard one comedian talk about tornadoes saying that they were the jerks of natural disasters. If there is a hurricane, every house gets demolished. If there is an earthquake, every house gets affected. But if there is a tornado, hmm, maybe just Jeff's house. Anyway, Californians don't have to worry about tornadoes. And I know what you are thinking, "Californians have to worry about earthquakes." Nope. I have been in several 6.5 magnitude earthquakes, and they may knock over a picture off the wall. No biggie. What people on the west coast really need to be concerned about is wildfires. There have been so many times when we were almost evacuated due to wildfires. There was one year where an arsonist intentionally set fires all across the perimeter of San Diego County. Our little town in North San Deigo was the only city that did not have a fire going. Millions of dollars and a few lives lost all started with a simple spark. One spark can ignite a wildfire that destroys thousands of acres, homes and even lives.

Why do I share this story. I want to illustrate the power of one moment of surrender to the Lord. Your "yes" in the Spirit can do far more than you can ever imagine. Here is the most remarkable part of this thought, even if the situation is completely hopeless or impossible, God can still do it. Do you believe that this morning family? The title of today's message is "Dead Things Come Alive." What areas in your life need life? What have you allowed to die? What has the enemy stolen? It is my prayer that you walk away from the message today feeling more equipped and more encouraged to trust God with the "impossibles" of life.

The Bible is not silent on dead things coming to life. There are roughly fourteen resurrections mentioned in the Bible. You have the Shunamite woman's son in 2 Kings 4, Jarius' daughter in Mark 5, Lazarus in John 11, Obviously Jesus, and my personal favorite in is Matthew 27 when Jesus dies on the cross, the Scripture says when He cried out "it is finished," the graves of saints who had died were opened and people were resurrected. There was so much resurrection power in the death of Jesus that the ripple effect was other resurrections. So, like a California wildfire, are you a resurrection starter? Let me give you a spoiler alert and tell you that you have everything you need in the Spirit already. Romans 8:11 says "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your *mortal bodies* through His Spirit who dwells in you."

Of all the resurrection stories in the Bible I want to teach from the book of Ezekiel in chapter 37, the story of the valley of dry bones. Every preacher is allowed to preach on this chapter at least 20 times and I think I am only on number 7 in the last twenty years. If you have your bibles, go with me to the Prophet Ezekiel beginning in verse 1 of chapter 37:

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones.

The Hebrew word here for "hand" means a physical hand but also power. Think about "the upper hand" or "hand them over." Ezekiel had the hand and power of the Lord on him *before* he went through his circumstance. Think about how many times God provided the means before His servant went into the battle or circumstance. Even Jesus in Matthew 3. The Father spoke from heaven after Jesus' baptism and said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Jesus had the favor and acceptance of the Father *before* He started His ministry. Jesus went into ministry and the cross with all the power of Heaven and the Father's favor. You and I have the exact same blessing. The hand of the Lord was upon Ezekiel but that's not all. It says he was "brought out" by the Spirit of the Lord. Ezekiel was sent by the Spirit. Why is that important? Because you should never go any place where the Spirit Himself has not directed you. How many of us have been in places that got us in trouble only to realize that it was our own fault? It wasn't a demon it was a decision.

There is still more to this first verse. Not only was the hand of the Lord on Ezekiel and led by the Spirit of God, but it says the Spirit dropped him in the valley of dry bones. When we think of the favor of the Lord and the guidance of the Lord we tend to only think of positive and happy things. Sometimes God leads us into unpleasant situations. He is not a bad Father or desires to see us suffer. We have to realize that we are equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit AND have been given authority from heaven. If God drops you in the middle of the valley, it means that you have **everything you need to find victory in that valley.** Are firefighters afraid of fire? No, because they have all the training and all the resources to extinguish fires. So, when there is a blaze, we call the ones who can handle the situation. Sometimes you are in a bad situation not because of Satan but because you carry the solution.

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.

There are two things here that we need to pay attention to. The first is that the valley was FULL of bones. Sometimes life feels like there is only sin and only evil everywhere we look. If you watch the news all day you will definitely feel that way. Not only was the valley full but the bones themselves were not buried and dry. It was a disgrace to not bury the dead according to Jewish law and customs. These dead bodies were denied a proper burial AND were unfit to serve or do anything in the Kingdom of God because they were unclean. But they were also very dry. Why is that important? For one, it shows the severity and the impossibility of these bones coming back to life. Only God, only a miracle could cause these bones to live again. The second aspect is that if the bones were dry, it means they were there for a very long time. I am sure no one in this room has ever felt that their circumstance has gone on *forever.* Not only was Ezekiel facing an impossible situation, but this situation had been going on for a very long time. Here is a little bit of practical ministry advice. Sometimes you will pray for someone who has had cancer for years. Or someone whose marriage has been in trouble for years. Your job as a minister of the Gospel is to convince that person to pray for their situation as if it was for the very first time. I don't know about you, but I serve the living God and ANY situation I face in lifer is subpar to the power of my God. Someone can say to you, "This is impossible!" And your response should be, "All things are possible for my God."

3 He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, You know."

This verse both challenges me and makes me laugh so hard. It challenges me because God asked Ezekiel a question. God asked if this impossible situation as possible in Ezekiel's perspective. God already knows the answer. God can take care of this issue all by Himself if He wanted to. But God is in the business of using His children to carry out His will on earth as it is in heaven. Your "yes" is so critical to your victory. Your yes to God is a partnership in faith with the Creator of the Universe. Before anything happened, God asked Ezekiel if this could be done. I love that. But I love his answer so much more and this is what makes me laugh. Ezekiel answered, "Oh Lord You know." What a safe answer. I mean, it was true. God knows all things and is all powerful. But it was still the wrong answer. God asked *Ezekiel* if these bones could live, not can God make these bones live.

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 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.'"

Let me ask you a question you don't have to answer. What is prophesy? Prophesy is hearing a message from God and then communicating it to His desired target. It is not always prophesying the future result or something allegorical. Sometimes it is delivering a straight word from the Lord. Now, let me ask you another question. Where does prophecy come from? If you said the Lord, you are correct. So, Ezekiel passes the test with the Lord, the Spirit and hand of God are all over him, but now he needs to put that in action. You see, Ezekiel is a doer of the Word of God not just a listener. And when Ezekiel went into action with prophecy, he did so in connection with the Lord. Every step you take in your circumstance had better be connected to the voice of the Lord. Otherwise, you are setting yourself up for failure.

Bones were very important to the Jews. They represented life and identity. Adam even said after Eve was created, "This is now flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone." Here in Ezekiel these bones represented Israel and God's promised. Natural human bones far outlast sink, tissue, and organs. It was a demonstration that God's people would be able to outlast anything. Even if it was completely dead and dry, there was hope. Hope is so absolutely powerful. The very definition of depression is that you cannot see any hope of the future every changing. The Bible says that hope deferred makes the heart sick.

7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a 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, "Prophesy 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.
– Ezekiel 37:1-10 NASB1995

This is very similar to the creation of man in Genesis. In Genesis 2:7 it says that God formed man out of the dust of the earth, and he was not a living being until the breath of life was breathed into him. What does this mean to me? It means if you build something or go after a big issue, if you build something without the Lord's leading you are building in vain. Remember Psalm 127 which says, "Unless the Lord builds the house they labor in vain."

Let me bring us back to the main point of this sermon. God wants to bring life to dead things in your life. But if we are going to see God do the miracle, there are a few things we need to do.

POINT #1 – Go into the valley with a heart of <u>Conquest.</u>

Gabriel got a new and awesome opportunity this past week. A friend passed along an opportunity to become an electrician apprentice. Gabriel already has a good job, but the kid is serious about his future and wanted to save some serious money. He went to orientation and did all of his paperwork but the next thing he needed was to purchase all of his required tools. The kid is blessed to have a great dad and one who would spend a few hundred dollars buying all of his tools from Home Depot. It was Thursday evening when we went and then I spent the rest of the night with him showing him each tool, adjusting his tool belt, and ensuring he was ready. As a dad it was precious to get my almost 20-year-old set up with his first tool set and "big boy job." Gabriel is always a bit nervous when starting a new job so not only did we make sure everything worked and fit right on his tools, but I encouraged him to watch videos on electrical basics just to ease some of the nerves.

As a dad I wanted to do everything possible to ensure he was fully equipped to go into his first day. You may or may not know but you are fully equipped in the Spirit to go into every circumstance with favor and power. Before Ezekiel prophesied to the dry bones, he first had an encounter with the Lord. Our attitude in life should be "Lord, You had me at hello." Even though I have been a believer for 30 years, I still find myself from time to time trying to battle something without ever seeking the Lord first. What was I thinking?

POINT #2 – Go into the valley with a heart of <u>Connection.</u>

Ezekiel was not just a prophet; he was a priest coming from the tribe of Levi. The Levites were the priestly tribe that served the Lord in the Tabernacle and Temple. Their whole lives were dedicated to ministry unto the Lord. This shows up with Ezekiel as he walks with the Lord through every step of the journey. He didn't just get his marching orders from the Lord and then go off on his own. He stay in communication and connection with the Lord every step of the way.

POINT #3 – Go into your valley with a heart of <u>Compliance</u>.

Sometimes this means radical obedience. Can you imagine Ezekiel being asked to prophesy to old and dry bones so that they would come back to life? That's impossible! But not to our God. Ezekiel didn't question God, ask to be excused, or put up an excuse. If the Lord said, he would do it. What an example and challenge to us all.