

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

**[Introduction]**

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.” Acts Chapter 2 Verses 1 to 4.

What must have it been like on that first day of Pentecost, when the apostles first truly knew the life that was inside of them? When they truly knew the Lord.

Do you have any comparison today?

How do you know the Lord?

How do you know the life that is inside of you?

How many days do you wake up and think to yourself, “How lively do I really feel like being today? Maybe I should just lie back down and try again in 15 mins?”

It can be truly hard to push through life in this world.

We see violence, destruction, and evil all around us.

We see a world that makes us weary. A world where we question whether or not these old bones can keep on going.

We see a world that does not know the Lord.

We see a world, where we begin to question whether or not we “truly” know the Lord ourselves.

In our sermon for today I’ll be walking you through our Old Testament text from Ezekiel as he is given a prophetic vision. A vision that would give comfort and hope to the old bones of Israel. And a vision that comforts us today, in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit has given us life.

**[Verses]**

As we start to dig into this text, let me first take a moment to answer the question, “Who was Ezekiel?”

Ezekiel, was a prophet and a priest who lived with the first wave of Judean exiles in Babylon. Our text takes place after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC. At this point Ezekiel's message has, for the most part, switched from law to gospel. In fact, our old testament text today is a gospel proclamation to the whole house of Israel.

Ezekiel starts out in Chapter 37 **verses 1 & 2** by saying, "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."

As this prophecy begins Ezekiel travels my means of the Holy Spirit, who brings him to a valley full of the bones of the dead. But these dead are so far gone that we can't even tell who they were.

We are left wondering what happened here?

Why are there so many dead?

Then as Ezekiel is led around among the immense valley of bones we start to realize that these bones are very, very, dry, you might even say they are to point of crumbling at the touch.

These bones are not the recently deceased or the battlefield injury where there is hope of medical intervention. These people are dead beyond anything we've seen and beyond our wildest imagination of being able to sustain life again.

And yet, almost laughably, God asks Ezekiel in **verse 3**, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

My own inner monologue takes over at this point and says, "Of course, not! Don't be ridiculous! These bones are as good as dust. The only 'living,' these bones are going to do, is live out the remainder of their existence as soil for the plants."

Instead, however, Ezekiel answers, "O Lord GOD, you know."

What an amazing statement of truth.

Ezekiel recognizes that only God knows how to create & sustain life.

Therefore, as if he had expected the prompt, God moves the question forward by telling Ezekiel in **verse 4**. "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD."

What a miserable job Ezekiel must have had as a prophet at this point! Here he is, told to prophecy, not to stubborn people or people who might disagree with him, but to people who are nothing more than dead dry bones.

How in the world are bones supposed to hear the prophecy? Bones can't hear! However, the Word of God does what it says. It caused time, existence, and all of creation and reality to come into being. How much simpler is it to make dead bones hear?

But not only will these bones hear, but God tells Ezekiel to say in **verses 5 & 6**, “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.”

Notice the order that these things are to occur. First God will create new sinews, flesh, and skin, but life will not be restored until breath enters into them. Then after they are living will they know that God is the Lord.

It is the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit that restores and brings to life. In Hebrew, the word for breath, wind, and spirit is the same word, it is the word *ruach*. It is only after they have been given the spirit, the *ruach*, that God says they “shall know that I am the Lord.” (v 6).

Ezekiel then continues in **verses 7 & 8**, “So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.”

Ezekiel pauses here as if to take a breath himself and make sure this multitude of corpses is really what it appears. A valley filled with bones that have been restored to bodies, but not yet to life. No breath meant **NO** life. The spirit gives life.

Next in **Verses 9 & 10** it says, “Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, 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 may live.” 10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.”

Here now a multitude of believers have been restored to life. Believers with the *ruach* of God, the Spirit of God living inside of them.

They have been brought to life despite their own best efforts at decomposing into fertilizer.

They have been brought to life outside of their own choice, will, knowledge, or ability.

Instead, only by the power of the Holy Spirit, are they alive.

Moving on with **Verse 11**, “Then he said to me, “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 indeed cut off.’ ”

These bones are the bones of the whole house of Israel and we here today are part of that house. We have been wearied by our sins and the sins of the world. We sit in the despair of our sin and our hopes of the future have been disillusioned, but through Christ, we **are** the new Israel. We **are** the new people of the promise. The promise of God given by Jesus himself when he says “Go therefore and make disciples of **all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Mt 28:19–20).

As we are now children of the promise we also can rest assured in **the life** that the Holy Spirit has given us in our baptism, because as the Lord says through Ezekiel in verses **13 & 14**, “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.”

### [*Conclusion*]

After the life given to you in your faith & baptism, comes the knowledge of the Lord. The Word of God does what it says. If it can cause time, existence, and all of creation and all reality to come into being, how much simpler is it to make our dead sinful bones raise up out of the grave? The *ruach* of God, the Holy Spirit, the breath of the Lord, the mighty rushing wind of Pentecost has called you by the Gospel, enlightened you with His gifts, sanctified and kept you in the true faith. The Holy Spirit has given you life, so that you shall know that Christ is the Lord, amen.

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“Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do His will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Heb 13:20-21)

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