

## **We're not home yet (7/31/22)**

Sermon Description: "Our hope is lost." This is the point we are at in God's story. Is this the end? What is to happen next? Is it true that all hope is lost? You may feel similarly. If so, this sermon is for you.

Main Passage: Ezekiel 37:1-14

Title: We're not home yet

Topics: New Creation >> Hope

Tags: resurrection, death, hopeless, lost

Questions to consider:

- Are you feeling hopeless? If so, have you expressed this to God and at least one other person?
- What has been your response to these feelings? In other words, what have you turned to for hope and life amidst your hopelessness?
- Is it possible—here and now—that we let Jesus do a work of unwinding us, bit by bit, that we might be "dissevered" from those things in order to be reunited with the Lord of life and hope?

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### **"Our hope is lost"**

Where we've been:

God created a Kingdom, and he is the king, yet he made human beings to represent him in that Kingdom. Adam and Eve rejected this call, which led to sin and death. But God promised to defeat the serpent through the seed of the woman, who is also the seed of Abraham. Through Abraham's family, and specifically Judah's royal seed, David, the covenant blessings would come to the world. Because all people were guilty and deserved death, the sacrifices of the Mosaic law revealed more clearly their need for a substitute—the suffering servant.

### **Today: Resurrection Promised!**

Today's text:

#### **Ezekiel 37:1–14**

<sup>1</sup>The hand of the LORD was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know." <sup>4</sup>Then he said to me,

“Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! <sup>5</sup>This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup>I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.’ ” <sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’ ” <sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. <sup>11</sup>Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ ” <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. <sup>14</sup>I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’ ”

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## **Ezekiel 37:1–2**

<sup>1</sup>The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry.

We don’t have to wonder about what is being referenced. Just keep reading.

## **Ezekiel 37:11**

<sup>11</sup>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.’ ”

Recall where we are in the story. The Israelites in the north have already been exiled. Judah, in the south, is under threat of exile...and they fail to repent, which results in exile. These are not good times so much so that they exclaim with one voice, “Our hope is lost.”

Before moving on, pay attention to the language being used, specifically the imagery. Consider the following list which is just a small sample of what Ezekiel employs. These physical depictions are intended to communicate spiritual truths.

Dirty/Clean

Darkness/Light

Defiled/Purified

Dry/Water

Idolatry/Worship of God

Bones/Flesh

Strife/Peace

Estranged/Covenant

Deaf/Hear

Cut off/Joined together

Mute/Speech

Death/Life

Prostrate/Standing

Hopeless/Hopeful

Now, translate a few of these images into contemporary life. What might dryness correspond to in our lives? What might darkness connect with for us today? Here's just a short list of possibilities that you and I might struggle with.

- Childhood trauma or neglect
- Any mental health disorder
- Self-criticism or judgment
- Social anxiety
- Not living up to overly high standards that you set for yourself, or is set for you by parents/spouse/boss/etc.
- Feeling as though your flaws or inadequacy will be revealed
- Being the victim of bullying or assault or abuse or rape
- Expectations not being met or experiencing failure
- Rejection from others or a weakening of a relationship
- Depression or Anxiety or both
- Alcohol or drug problems
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Alienation and isolation or feelings of doom
- Financial hardships
- Some form of oppression or powerlessness
- Success: Money, prestige, title, responsibility

### **Ezekiel 37:3**

<sup>3</sup>He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

What is the presumed answer to the question? NO!! Dry dead ones don't live. They don't live again. They did live. But they don't live again. But Ezekiel doesn't say that. He looks to the Lord who is the author of life and effectively says, "Your call."

### **Ezekiel 37:4-6**

<sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! <sup>5</sup>This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup>I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.' "

By his Word, by his breadth, by his Spirit, LIFE COMES. It was true in God's work of creation in Genesis 1 and 2. It's demonstrated here as well.

To what end? And this that we might know that he is the LORD and there is no other.

### **Ezekiel 37:7-9**

<sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' "

Ezekiel speaks. And it happens.

Don't forget: physical realities speak to spiritual realities. This is a miracle of physical life. But it points to something much greater—it is God restoring life and worship and praise and grace and goodness to his people. He is bringing them back into relationship with himself.

### **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

<sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army. <sup>11</sup>Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. <sup>14</sup>I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.' "

Did you hear that? <sup>11</sup>Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. **They say**, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.'

They say. They say these things. They say our bones are dried up. They say our hope is lost. They say we are cut off.

But God. But God speaks a better word. But God speaks a different word, one of hope and renewal and new life. God speaks a word of resurrection.

To what end? That they would once again know that he is the Lord. He is the Lord and there is no other. He is the author of life and life is found in his Son through the power and presence of his Holy Spirit. He has done these things.

Hear this: we do not have life in ourselves. He gives it. He authors it. He provides it. Physically and spiritually, we are dry dead bones. In his grace, he authors life—new life—through the gospel!

Because we're working hard in this series to understand the storyline of the bible, the presence of resurrection must be found throughout God's story. And it is.

## **2 Kings 13:21**

<sup>21</sup>Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet. (cf. 1 Kings 17:17-24, 2 Kings 4:32-37)

Do you see that? The dead body of one brings life to another! That's a picture of the gospel preached in advance of Jesus, his cross, his death, and his resurrection. In this story, we are given a glimpse. Life comes out of death. Somehow, the touching of a dead body by another dead body causes one of the dead bodies to spring back to life. That's a picture of the gospel. On account of the dead body of Jesus, we reach out to him, to touch him, and when we do, life comes to us. Specifically, spiritual life comes to us. We die to ourselves and, behold, we now live again. We are resurrected to new life.

Jesus makes it abundantly clear:

## **John 11:21–26**

<sup>21</sup>“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” <sup>23</sup>Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” <sup>24</sup>Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” <sup>25</sup>Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup>and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

**“Our hope is lost”** – Some of us feel like hope is lost. In all honesty, even today we may be saying of Jesus, “I don't believe this.” Or “I don't feel this.”

Consider that list above. How many of us deeply feel those realities on the left side of the ledger? In my estimation, we tend to respond in one of two ways. These two ways are depicted in what's commonly known as the Story of the Prodigal Son. But the truth is there are two sons, each of which is lost.

The older brother is lost because of religion. The younger brother is lost because of irreligion. The older tries to earn it. The younger aims to spurn his father. Both want the inheritance but seek out different ways to achieve. One by staying within the system. And the other by burning it down.

These brothers are depicted within Hamilton in the characters of Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton. The former is lost because of compliance. The latter is lost because of defiance. The former tries to earn it by playing the game, following the rules. The latter aims to spurn his peer and change the game. Both want the influence. Both want the outcome. Both want their shot. But they seek out different ways to achieve it. One by staying within the system. And the other by burning it down.

Listen to these lyrics:

From Aaron Burr

Geniuses, lower your voices  
You keep out of trouble and you double your choices  
I'm with you, but the situation is fraught  
You've got to be carefully taught  
If you talk, you're gonna get shot

From Alexander Hamilton

I'm past patiently waitin'  
I'm passionately smashin' every expectation  
Every action's an act of creation  
I'm laughin' in the face of casualties and sorrow  
For the first time, I'm thinkin' past tomorrow

Are these the only two ways? We succumb to the hopelessness of the Israelites? Or we take it upon ourselves to secure the life we've always wanted, come what may? So often we believe in a false dichotomy. It's this or this.

The Bible offers us a third option. The Valley of Dry Bones offers us a different story. The gospel preaches that the death of another will bring life. It's not about your compliance or defiance. It's not about sticking to the system or burning down the system. It's about life in the Spirit.

### **John 20:21–22**

<sup>21</sup>Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup>And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

HOW DO WE GO from our cries of "Our hope is lost" to God's response of "I will put my Spirit in you and you will live"???

C. S. Lewis, in the preface of *The Great Divorce* says, "A wrong sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it afresh from that point, never by simply going on. Evil can be undone, but it cannot "develop" into good. Time does not heal it. The spell must be unwound, bit by bit, "with backward mutters of dis severing power"-or else not."

Let's try doing that right now. Through asking and answering a series of questions, let's aim to go back to the error, the point of departure, bit by bit, that God might dis sever, might unhook us from that trap. Let's aim to go back and preach the gospel to ourselves in that place.

Are you feeling hopeless?

If so, have you identified the source/cause of these feelings?

Have you expressed this to God and at least one other person?

What has been your response to these feelings?

In other words, what have you turned to for hope and life amidst your hopelessness?

What results have these things delivered?

Is it possible—here and now—that we let Jesus do a work of unwinding us, bit by bit, that we might be “dissevered” from those things in order to be reunited with the Lord of life and hope through his Spirit?

**Psalm 73:25–26**

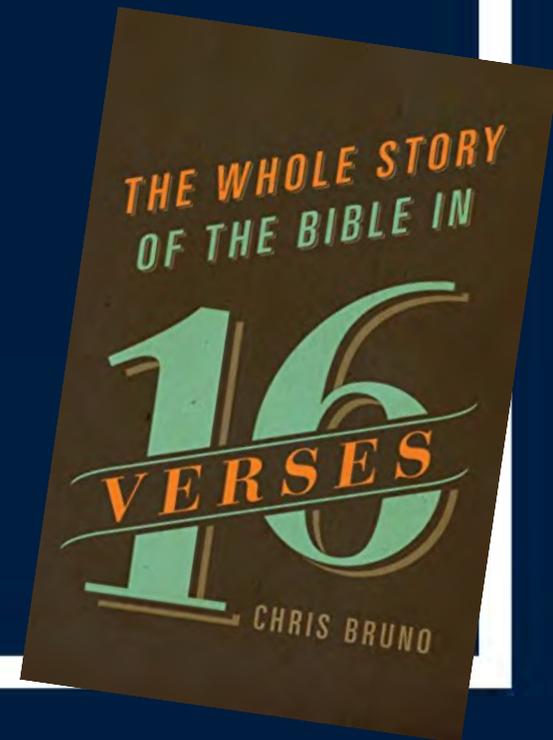
<sup>25</sup>Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.

<sup>26</sup>My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

So, as the Lord asked Ezekiel, so I ask you, **“Can these bones live and hope be restored?”**

[hopecc.com/16verses](http://hopecc.com/16verses)

THE  
STORY  
OF THE  
BIBLE IN  
**16**  
VERSES



**“Our hope is lost”**

**Creation**      **Human Beings**      **The Fall**      **Redemption Promised**      **Abraham**



**The Time Is Coming**

**New Creation**      **Resurrection Promised**      **Suffering Servant**      **King David**      **Passover Lamb**      **Judah the King**



**Fulfillment**      **The Cross**      **Resurrection**      **Justification**      **Glory**



**The Time Has Come**

## Ezekiel 37:1-2

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Hopeless / Hopeful

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RESURRECTION  
IN THE OLD  
TESTAMENT

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**“Our hope is lost”**

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You keep out of trouble

and you double your choices

I'm with you, but the situation is fraught

You've got to be carefully taught

If you talk, you're gonna get shot





I'm past patiently waitin'  
I'm passionately smashin' every expectation  
Every action's an act of creation  
I'm laughin' in the face of casualties  
and sorrow  
For the first time, I'm thinkin' past tomorrow



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From our cries of “Our hope is lost”

To God’s response of “I will put my  
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C.S. Lewis, Preface to *The Great Divorce*



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Can these bones live  
and hope be restored?