

Can These Bones Live?

For a moment, think of the prophet Ezekiel...as a reporter. And this passage in the Old Testament, think of it....as an interview. Ezekiel is talking with people on the street, getting their story, and in so doing he tells us exactly what the problem was in the life of Israel of his day.

He holds the microphone up to the faces of individuals, one by one, asking this probing question, “What do you think....about living as exiles...here in the land of Babylon?” [What do you feel like...being stuck here, in this awful situation?] One of his first subjects says, “*Our bones are dried up.*” Another shakes her head sorrowfully and admits, “*Our hope is lost.*” Still another, a young man frantic in his response says in quick tempo, “*We are cut off completely.*” (There’s no escape.)

But Ezekiel is a great reporter, and he goes on, probing deeper. He discovers that, “a downcast spirit dries up the bones”, like Proverbs says. And he realizes that what he has heard here is the effect...of depression. A whole people, a whole nation....depressed. Given up. Hopeless. [Does that remind you of some churches today, sometimes? Homestead Presbytery has been closing churches for decades now. JEFF, confirm this....! Ezekiel goes on to say.... these people ...in exile, are Israelites, the cream of their society back home, now digging canals in a foreign land. They have lost their one hope, that they were a special people..whom God watched over. And so, their frantic cry, “*WE ARE CUT OFF...COMPLETELY!*”.... Cut off from God, that is.

With this setting, do you understand God’s question... about dry bones? Ezekiel, one of the most bizarre people in the Bible, is escorted by God to a valley full of “very dry” bones.

But ~ ~ *God tells the prophet how these bones can live again*, where they can find hope, and how these living bodies (bones...knit with sinew come to life)....can find God.

- How is that?

The way bones come alive is through the word of the Lord. God orders Ezekiel to preach the word.. so that breath comes from the four winds to fill those skeletal remains. That they might be reborn, just as the Creator breathed life the first time into the nostrils of that hunk of clay - Adam.

At this point, Israel considers herself dead...as a nation. She is in exile. She has lost her land, her temple, her Davidic king, her covenant - her relationship with God. The forces of death have overwhelmed her; armies have conquered her. And now her exiles have been carried off to a foreign land where they are without even the possibility of life, like long-dry bones, scattered aimlessly about a parched and desolate valley. *No human help can restore Israel, she is beyond all hope.*

Now – it is in this state, in this awful condition, while they are all slaves....Ezekiel hears this amazing question...God asks, “Son of man, **can these bones live?** Ezekiel, born of woman, is there hope for your race?

It’s a question that confronts us also, here at Heritage. When life crumbles in on us and loving relationships are gone; when pain accompanies our every hour and makes normality impossible; *when anxieties haunt our nights and days and undermine our every security*; when evil stalks our suburban streets and we feel we can trust no stranger; when our world seems bathed in nothing but bloody violence and all goodness seems impossible; it’s times like this...**times like now**.....when we too wonder if there can ever even be the possibility of new life. Sometimes we feel our hope is dried up, and our future nothing but ominous.

And God asks Ezekiel, “Is there hope....for your people?”

And how does Ezekiel answer? Wisely.

Ezekiel say, “Lord, only you know!”

.....That’s true. Human means - - are not sufficient - to overpower the force of death which still holds captive our world. Try as we might we never seem able to set all things right. Broken relationships, suffering, crime, violence and evil, none of our programs (government or church); our best intentions seem unable to do away with problems forever. For every solution, there is a new problem, for every program, an unforeseen shortcoming. And unless our healing and restoration are in God’s hands, life seems impossible; our hope is dried up...and brittle. So, “Will God restore us?”

What's going on in your life? Can your bones live; is your will...brittle and dried up, crumbled to despair? Do we here feel 'clean cut off'...from God?

A lot of people, and somepeople in this church, live lives of quiet desperation. Sometimes we feel that what we see – is all we get, and any thought of a spiritual realm or of anything having to do with God...is far from our minds and hearts, most of the time. We've given up on everything, except what comes next. ~ ~ And when we do that...fate...has already won.

If that is where we are; if Ezekiel has pointed his microphone at us and we are in the camera man's light, having given a gloomy, doomed answer...just like others around us...here's the truth: **we...can be....transformed!**

We, who feel ourselves lost and dead...can find ourselves *alive* - again. Alive and whole, powered by God's living Word!

Can our bones live again? Heck yes. **Heavens...yes!!** In Jesus we can be born again. That's why he came, that we might have life....and have it more...abundantly!

Inside of people, all people, there's a divine spark. And it's still burning...though the world's getting mighty dark. It's the spark of God, the spark that makes all people great. And we've got to get it burning...hotter than any selfishness or hate.

Give in, Beloved...to new life. Surrender...to the Hope we have that will never disappoint us. God...is. And with God.....all things are possible.

Amen.