

Aug 22, 2015

Ezekiel 32:1-14

Ready for God: We need God

Jonathan M. Romig

Cornerstone Congregational Church
32 Graniteville Rd.
Westford, MA 01886

978-692-6360

jonathan@cornerstonewestford.com

Introduction:

1. There's something I need to confess right away—I'm not from here; I'm from Colorado.
2. I had a very long commute to my job—it was about 4 minutes.
3. One day as I was backing out of the driveway my whole car slammed sideways (show picture).
4. For days after I totaled my first car I felt really sore and really frustrated with myself.
5. I'd just killed my first car and nothing was going to bring my car back.
6. Have you ever been going through life and something just hits you out of nowhere?
7. Maybe you lose your job, your parent dies, or the one you thought loved you says "not any more."
8. Your joy and happiness turns into sadness... your life has turned into a car wreck.
9. Do you believe God can bring life out of death?
10. 2,600 years ago God asked a prophet named Ezekiel this same question.

(God gave Ezekiel a vision of a valley of dry bones and asked him if the bones could live again.)

I. God wants to know if you believe he can give dry bones life (**Read v. 1-3**)

- A. To understand our story, we need to understand the history of the nation of Israel. (context)
 1. God loved Israel but they kept disobeying so God judges Jerusalem and sends them into exile.
 2. Ezekiel is in Babylon in exile when God takes him in a vision to a valley of dry bones.
 3. These dry bones symbolize the nation of Israel and how they've lost all hope (v. 11).
 4. We don't know exactly where the valley is but I think God took Ezekiel to Jerusalem.
 5. East of Jerusalem is the Kidron valley and it's a place where Jerusalem buried its dead.
 6. When you're going into exile you don't have time to bury the dead properly (so lots of bones).
- B. God takes Ezekiel to this valley of dry bones and asks him to believe. (v. 1-3a)
 1. God says, "Son of man, can these bones live?"
 2. That's the same question God is asking you now, "Do you believe I can bring life out of death?"
- C. The story of this church plant is a story of God bringing life out of death.
 1. In the 90s there was a thriving church right here called Westford Bible Church.
 2. We don't know exactly why it died but over the course of the next 25 years it shrank.
 3. God asked that church "Can these bones live?" and they said "yes, but not through us."
 4. God asked Immanuel, Monica and me, and everyone on our team this same question.
 5. If you come and join us, you're also saying "yes" to God's question.

(It's not easy to believe God can bring life out of death. How much do we need to trust God?)

- D. The prophet Ezekiel believes a little, and it's enough. (v. 3b)
 1. He answers, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know."
 2. When Ezekiel calls God Sovereign he's saying he's all powerful.
 3. In other words, Ezekiel is saying that only God knows and only God can do it.
 4. His faith is partial, but enough—he doesn't believe in the miracle, but he does believe in God.

(This is what God wants from us today too—he wants to know we believe in him.)

(God wants to know if you believe he can make dry bones live.)

II. God promises to bring dry bones to life (v. 4-6)

- A. There are two type of dry bones: 1) zombies, and 2) post-mortician bodies
 - 1. Zombies are those people everyone knows are dead.
 - 2. They are the walking dead and you try to avoid them at the water cooler.
 - 3. They're mad at life because there's always something going wrong.
 - 4. Post-mortician bodies are those people everyone thinks are fine.
 - 5. A mortician takes a dead corpse, paints them up, and makes them look alive.
 - 6. These people have good jobs, healthy families, and a nice house, but they're not happy.
 - 7. Are you a Zombie or a post-mortician body? Both are dead.

(If you're dead, there's nothing you can do to save yourself, but I have good news.)

- B. God promises to give us life without our help. (**Read v. 4-6**)
 - 1. God tells Ezekiel to tell the bones "I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life."
 - 2. God doesn't say, "I may make breath enter you, and there's a possibility you'll live."
 - 3. This is a promise for the future, so it does require faith, but that's it—God wants our trust.
 - 4. When we feel dead, so dead that we don't want things to get better, God still wants us to live.

- C. Sometimes I've felt discouraged about life too.
 - 1. I've felt bad enough that I didn't want to get better or go forward with anything.
 - 2. That's when God asks me, "Can these bones live?"
 - 3. Can you Jonathan experience new spiritual life? *Yes Lord.*
 - 4. God asks us too... Can this church building experience new spiritual life? *Yes Lord.*
 - 5. Can this hungry community of Westford experience new spiritual life? *Yes Lord.*
 - 6. I am so happy God helped me trust him when it was hard.

(God promises to bring dry bones to life.)

III. God gives dry bones life in ways we don't expect (v. 7-10)

- A. First, God restores hope through his words. (**Read v. 7-8**)
 - 1. Ezekiel obeys God and prophesies God's message directly to the bones. (preaching)
 - 2. Another meaning of this Hebrew word for "rattling" is "earthquake."
 - 3. Ezekiel didn't hear wind chimes or a rain stick—the whole earth shook.
 - 4. Tendons and flesh and skin appears on this great multitude of bones, but they're still dead.
 - 5. Although the bones aren't alive, their situation has improved just from hearing God's words.
 - 6. Today we also can hear God's words through the Bible.
 - 7. One of our Core Values is: "Bible - We study, preach, apply, and share God's Word."
 - 8. We believe in the Bible because when we read this book, it restores our hope.

(First, God restores hope through his words.)

- B. Second, God gives life through his Spirit. (**Read v. 9-10**)
 - 1. On Ezekiel's second try, God directs him to prophecy to "the four winds." (prayer)
 - 2. The word for wind is the same Hebrew word for breath or Spirit (*rûah* = *10x*).

3. So when God says to ask the wind to come, he's saying "Ask my Holy Spirit to come."

John 3:8 says "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (NIV)

4. We can't control the Holy Spirit just like we can't control the wind.
5. You can't be really good one day and expect there to be more wind (Cape beach).
6. Likewise, you can't be really good one day and expect God to love you any more.

(God restores hope through his words and gives life through his Spirit.)

(But if we can't control the Spirit, what can we do?... We can ask God to send the wind.)

IV. If your bones are dry, call on God. (**Read v. 11-14**)

A. If your bones are dry, call on God.

1. Ezekiel tells the nation of Israel to call on God and they do.
2. God brings his people out of exile and back to their homeland.
3. But God promises something even better, he says, "I will put my Spirit in you and you will live."
4. If you come back on 9/12, you'll learn about another one of Ezekiel's visions when this happens.
5. Just returning to the land doesn't fix Israel's problem because they'll still rebel against God.
6. The people of God need his Holy Spirit to come and give them a new start.
7. If your bones are dry, call on God.

B. There's only one way to receive the Spirit of God.

1. Notice that God changes the vision from bones to graves.
2. There's been no mass resurrection of people rising from their graves.
3. But there has been one resurrection of one man rising from his grave, and that's Jesus Christ.
4. Remember how Ezekiel's dry bones vision could have taken place outside of Jerusalem?
5. The Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus began his journey to the cross, is in the Kidron Valley.
6. Jesus brings dry bones to life through his death and resurrection from the grave.
7. God promises that all who trust in Jesus will also rise from the grave too.

(If your bones are dry, call on God. Call on Christ!)

Conclusion:

1. We're going to close with a short tv commercial from Subaru ("They Lived.").
2. The amazing thing about this ad is that it's true—this is a real wreck where the driver really survived.
3. Maybe your life feels a little like this wreck—well you can really live through Jesus.
4. I want you to be able to say one day soon, "We lived."
5. If your bones are dry, call on God.

Pray for offering

Invite to join for refreshments

Romans 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* (NIV)