Ezekiel 37:1-6 The hand of the Lord came upon me. He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley, which was full of bones. 2He had me pass through them and go all over among them. There were very many on the valley floor, and they were very dry. 3He said to me, “Son of man, can these dry bones come back to life?” And I answered, “Lord God, you know.” 4Then he said to me, “Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5This is what the Lord God says to these bones: I am about to make breath enter you so you will come back to life. 6I will attach tendons to you. I will put flesh on you. I will cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you will live. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’”

The ministry of Ezekiel was so interesting. Ezekiel is that final prophet that God sends to his people Israel to try and get them to avoid, by repenting, the disaster is threatening. God, through Ezekiel and other prophets has told the nation of Judah that unless they repent and get back to believing and following Him he was going to destroy their nation by having them conquered and carried away. God threatened them in the same way he had threatened the Northern kingdom of Israel. Israel, 100 years earlier was also called upon to repent and return to the Lord. They didn’t. God had the nation of Assyria come in and destroy them and simply put, those 10 tribes were gone forever!

So the same situation and godlessness exists in Judah, the southern Kingdom. You think they would have learned. Yet I will tell you that the reason they haven’t learned is because there are all kinds of other prophets out there, false prophets who are proclaiming a much different message than Ezekiel. These false prophets, so-called ministers of God who serve Judah are proclaiming that God will deliver them. That the Babylonians will be destroyed and that God has proclaimed to them the triumphant victory of Judah over these great enemies. They proclaim this is the Word of God.

Imagine the surprise they had, yes, during Ezekiel’s life, for Ezekiel is one of the first carried off into captivity, when what Ezekiel has proclaimed comes true. Imagine their despair as Jerusalem is conquered and the city is horribly destroyed and its people killed. Imagine them seeing the Temple of Solomon looted and eventually destroyed! Then they were sorry. Then they realized the truth of what had been warned, but for many of them there was only death and hardship.

So now, here is Ezekiel, in captivity, and Ezekiel’s message gets to change. Now Ezekiel can and does offer a message of hope and redemption. Ezekiel gets to remind them that since they were the people through whom God had promised the Savior of the world that God would bring them back and restore them as a nation. They would come back to their land, come back to a new temple, come back to the hope of eternal life and salvation all because of God’s grace and mercy. Please note, this section of God’s Word before us is one of the messages of God’s grace and mercy they get to hear. Our theme will be: **MY PEOPLE, YOU WILL LIVE!**

Honestly, there are not many other sections of the Old Testament as powerful and meaningful as the one before us today. And even though these words are initially proclaimed and given to the people of Ezekiel’s day, please note that these words have tremendous impact and meaning even for us today. Because what these words proclaim and reveal is still a truth happening today. For today, you and I are still being given life, truth life in the name of and because of Jesus. Look at what is said.

First, we find Ezekiel, by the power of God’s Spirit given an eye opening lesson. Notice, we are told that Ezekiel was brought out by the Spirit of God to this valley of dry bones. I couldn’t tell you if this was a dream, a vision, or exactly what it was. I think of the Apostle Paul who spoke of his similar experience with the Lord. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12: **“So I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ who, fourteen years ago, was carried up to the third heaven (whether in the body, I do not know, or out of the body, I do not know—God knows).** Paul goes on in this way speaking again of in the body or out of the body and not knowing. Such seems to be the same situation for Ezekiel. A message from God. A clear message from God. A spectacular message from the Lord God.

Bones. A valley of dry bones. Bones piled upon bones. Dry bones. Bones that without a doubt have not a shred of life or even the hope of life of themselves or of anyone outside of the Lord himself. Once it is clearly established that this valley has dry, fragile, deteriorating, lifeless bones, then Ezekiel is given a clear and powerful command. God says, **“Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Lord God says to these bones; I am about to make breath enter you so you will come back to life. I will attach tendons to you. I will put flesh on you. I will cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you will live. Then you will know that I am the Lord.”**

Can you imagine what must have gone through Ezekiel’s mind? Preach to bones? Preach to bones so dry and gone? Yet Ezekiel is a prophet of the Lord. He does exactly what the Lord God tells him to do. He preaches what God tells him to. He preaches his message because God says to preach. In truth, to Ezekiel it didn’t matter that the bones were dry. It didn’t matter that dry bones have no ears or actually any ability within them. Ezekiel does what the Lord commands and the results is mind blowing.

The text tells us that as Ezekiel is preaching there is a sound, a rattling noise as the bones start moving and connecting to each other. More than that. The bones produce tendons and muscle and skin. Yet we are told that there is no breath in them.

So Ezekiel is commanded to preach more. Ezekiel is to call upon the wind, really the Spirit that these bones take on breath and life. And so it happens. Breath and life enters what was once dry bones and before Ezekiel stands a crowd of people, literally a crowd called an army. Before Ezekiel stands men and women, called back to life, given life, breathing life and standing ready to serve the Lord. Honestly, just to read these words and to think about what took place leaves one totally breathless and in awe!

Welcome to the power and wonder of the Lord our God. This miracle, this vision, if that’s what it is, is given to us to proclaim some very important truths of the Lord. Truths not only true then but truths that are still very much true today. Truths that proclaim the wonder of the life we have because of and before the Lord our God.

Truth one. You and I, all people, are very much because of our sinful nature, just like that valley of dry bones. There is no power in us. There is no ability in us to do anything but dry out and rot. There is nothing in us that deserves the goodness and grace of God. There is nothing but sin and its destructive ways. In the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians he says, **“You were dead in your trespasses and sins.”** In Romans the same message is heard of us: **“There is no one who is righteous, not even one. There is not one who understands, There is no one who searches for God. They have all turned away; together they became useless. There is no one who does what is good; there is not even one.”** There is no doubt, it is you and I, the potential children of God who are found on that valley floor. We are dried, rotting bones, without a shred of hope or life.

Truth two. Then comes the wonder of the Lord. The Word of God is brought to bear on us. Notice that even in this episode, though the Lord could have spoken himself, God uses Ezekiel, a servant, a prophet, a minister of the Word to proclaim the Word. And even though that word is proclaimed by Ezekiel, that Word still carries forth its power and marvel. That Word brings life to the lifeless. That word causes all things necessary, so that eventually, standing before the Lord are the servants and children of the Lord. And who has done it? The bones? Ezekiel? No, the power of the Lord God through His Word. The Lord is the author of life, true life, eternal life with and in Jesus. It is not our ability or even our desire to be saved, for in truth we are dry bones, brittle bones of the valley. We have life only and because of the power and wonder of God’s Holy Word.

Truth three. We know the truth and marvel of God. For the Jews of Ezekiel’s day, when they saw, and some of them did, all the things that would cause this nation of Jews to be returned to their homeland, returned to the city where they are given permission to rebuild the Temple of the Lord, then as our text says, **“We will know that the Lord is God.”** We will grasp his truth and wonder. We will grasp his compassion and care. We will grasp that God will and truly has done everything to bring to us life, true life in His name. And there is no doubt that the God of Ezekiel, the God of this nation of Judah is indeed, the one and true God, the Lord!

Yet I want you to know there is more for us to learn and marvel at. Listen to the words of verses 11-14. **11Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They are saying, ‘Our bones are dried up. Our hope is lost. We have been completely cut off.’ 12Therefore, prophesy and say to them that this is what the Lord God says. ‘My people, I am going to open your graves and raise you up from your graves, and bring you back to the soil of Israel. 13Then you will know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and when I raise you up from your graves, O my people. 14I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live. I will settle you on your own land, and you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.’”**

I do think we need to pay particular attention to what these words say. You could argue that these words are meant in only a spiritual way, that the being raised from the graves and being brought back to life is just a figurative way for the Lord to say he was going to restore them as the Jewish people once again, a Jewish people once again in their own land. And you would be right…partially right in that judgment. Only partially right because these words are pointing to some bigger and greater than just the nation being restored to the land they were taken from.

These words are actually a promise of our restoration, of our becoming the children of Israel, the nation that belongs to the Lord because we are of the same faith and hope as the original Israel was. We are that, because we have seen in the words of the Word these promises clearly and actually brought true.

Think of what will happen, actually for us, what has happened with and through Jesus. Jesus came, the Son of God. Jesus came to proclaim the restoration of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom where the light and truth of God is caused to shine and blaze away because God has sent His Son to atone for our sins. There is Jesus dying on the cross. There is Jesus paying the price for our disobedience and disbelief, making that sacrifice on our behalf that will change us and this world forever. As Jesus walked this earth what did you hear about? Resurrections. People brought back to life through the power of Jesus. Jairus’ daughter, the widow’s Son and of course the famous Lazarus. People raised from the grave, given back life in fulfillment of these words too.

Yet there is more. When Jesus died, what are we told took place? Matthew records this for us: **“Suddenly the temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and rocks were split. Tombs were opened, and many bodies of saints who had fallen asleep were raised to life. Those who came out of the tombs went into the holy city after Jesus’ resurrection and appeared to many people.”**

Truth four. These words of Ezekiel especially come true at the time of Jesus. People are actually raised from the dead and given new life. More than that, on Pentecost the Holy Spirit came with visible cue and wonderful power to call many to faith and hope in Jesus. All of this because of Jesus, literally in fulfillment of Ezekiel’s words and promises. And the end result of all of that? As our text said, **“Then you will know that I am the Lord…and you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it.”** We know the wonder and truth of God because Jesus has raised people, raised people as he lived, raised people as he died and then He himself came back to life to declare once and for all the truth of God and the salvation of our very souls. There is no doubt, not a single shred of doubt that Jesus is the Lord and yes, our Savior from sin, death and the devil.

We can even use these words to point to the great day of resurrection that is coming when Jesus returns on Judgment Day. All will be raised. All will be given life. Some will take that life to eternal damnation but for believers, we will be that vast army of people who will serve and live with the Lord forever and ever! My people, you will live!

The truth of God does not change. What God has shown and declared in Ezekiel is true for God’s people then and true for God people today. Oh my people, you will live! Live in and because of Jesus and his victory. Amen.