



# Belpres Church

## Revival is Resurrection

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Today's scripture comes from Ezekiel 37. 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. 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. He asked me, Son of man, can these bones live? I said, Sovereign Lord, you alone know. Then he said to me, prophesied to these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord, this is what the sovereign Lord says to these bones, I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life 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, 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. I looked and tendons and flesh appeared on them, and skin covered them, but there was number breath in them. Then he said to me prophesied to the breath prophecy, Son of Man, and say to it. This is what the Sovereign Lord says, Come breath from the four winds, and breathe into the slain, that they may live. And so I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them. They came to life and stood up on their feet a vast army.

Then he said to me, Son of Man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say our bones are dread up and our hope is gone. We are cut off. Therefore, prophecy and say to them, this is what the sovereign Lord says, My people, I'm

going to open your graves and bring you up from them. I will bring you back to the land of Israel.

Then you, my people will know that I am the Lord. When I open your graves and bring you up from them, I will put my spirit in you and you will live and I will settle you in your land. Then you will know that I the Lord has spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord. Well, good morning.

My name is Becky Bastien and I am the elementary Pastor here at BelPres and a few weeks ago Anthony our director of Discipleship came up to elementary and taught in our big group. He was teaching on Pentecost the day when Jesus's disciples were gathered together waiting for the gift that Jesus had promised them.

They heard a great wind, and the Holy Spirit came to them, and they saw tongues of fire on each other's heads. I gave him a good story, right?

People from many countries heard the apostles. Then preaching in their own languages and they knew the apostles should not be able to speak their languages. And so they came to see what this was about, and they heard the good news of Jesus's death and resurrection and love for them and came to follow them, came to follow him.

Now this is an important story because it is one of the first time that God's Spirit was poured out on His church in this way. It led to revival in the formation of the early church.

And Anthony was teaching and at the 9:00 AM taught and then after the service, a kid came up and gave him a couple of Pokémon cards. Now, if you don't know, this is a true gift. Pokémon is back. It is very popular. And can be very valuable, but even better though one of the cards had a flame on the character's head.

And so Anthony used it at the 11 AM to talk about the flames that came to the early church.

Now I don't know everything about Pokémon, but I did have my husband explain it to me and he explained that Pokémon throughout the game or the show, Evolve.

They level up, they power up and so much in the same way when we receive the Holy Spirit in our lives we are who we were, but we are levelled up, We are powered up.

We have something new within us because the Holy Spirit transforms us now.

Last week, at the end of his sermon, Scott quoted the passage in Joel that Peter preached at Pentecost. Which says this, in the last days, God says I will pour out my spirit on all people, your sons and daughters will prophecy. Your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days and they will prophecy I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below blood and fire and billows of smoke. Oh my, the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Now this is the kind of stuff we should make movies about, right? I don't need another movie about Moses to show the kids.

I want a movie that has wonders and signs and sky turning to darkness and the moon to blood. No, I'm just kidding.

But I do want to know that when you hear these things this morning here in Bellevue, they might. Feel too spectacular? They might feel too Hollywood to even begin begin to believe right might feel too impossible. Especially if you have never seen them and at the first church I worked at the head pastor one time told me that because of his job he often heard people talking about these things that they had seen signs or wonders or heard God's voice out loud.

All right, now, if I'm going to be honest with you, I think that I should repent from a sin that I have committed. Listen to Scott's sermon last week.

And I believed it. We are all sinners. We should repent and celebrate that God Forgives us.

So here's my sin. I doubt it. And sometimes I still doubt when people talk about God moving in miraculous, wonderful ways. I had never really seen it before at that point in my career.

I hadn't really even grown up in a tradition where people talked about it but now, about a decade into here, I can tell you that I have heard because of my job here people talk about dreams, dreams and wonders seen and signs.

Here's the thing. I can still be skeptical though, because honestly, I do think sometimes people make things up. Have any of you ever wondered that? Has somebody ever told you something? No, you're all much more faithful than I am.

Great. All right. But I think sometimes people make things up, especially when it could serve them. I have heard in more than one context about a Christian saying, oh, you know what? God told me I should marry that person. Whether or not they've met them, I'm not sure about that. Or God gave them permission, them alone to commit a sin that the Bible definitely tells us not to do. Oh, not sure about that. But here's the thing that is not what. Revival is we've been talking about.

Revival for the last few weeks in our series here and today I want to help us to have tools to discern what is revival? What is a movement of God so that our skepticism doesn't stop us from seeing when God is on the move because revival is not hype.

It's not about being really loud. It's not about us getting smoke machines so i look really cool up here. In fact, revival often begins in quiet moments of prayer and confession No, revival isn't hype. Revival is resurrection. And today I want to look at one of my favorite prophetic visions in the Bible, which is Ezekiel and the Dry Bones We will look at Ezekiel for a model of how God brings revival and if you like me, are sometimes skeptical about the gifts of the Spirit?

Having a playbook for how we discern. What is the movement of God can be helpful?

I don't want to miss when God is on the move because I am just not sure if he is doing the things people say, I want to be able to discern.

What God is calling me to do. All right if you have your Bible or your Bible app, I invite you to open it to Ezekiel 37.

If you have a Physical Bible it's about 60% of the way through and we have Bibles through out the room if you need to grab one the Book of Ezekiel is in the section of the Bible that we call prophets, who are people who heard messages from God and then share them with people and I always tell kids it is OK to need

to use the table of contents to find the book in the Bible because God does not care if you have the order of the books memorized he cares that you're opening it to spend time with him.

Now to set the scene Ezekiel was a prophet. During the exile, a time when God's people have been scattered from the Promised Land, they were under oppressive rule and other nations often not allowed to practice their faith openly. It was a difficult time and the people of Israel, I imagine, wondered if God heard their prayers.

I wonder if you've ever wondered that too. Let's see what God has to say to them in Ezekiel 37 verse one, God says this, the hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out of the Spirit, brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord, and set me in the middle of a valley.

It was full of bones 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. Pause here. Do we think this was an encouraging vision for Ezekiel?

Do we think this is what he was hoping for, he's like. Yeah, we are living through a terrible time, thanks God. But God starts with what is true and then transforms it in our lives. Then God asks him this question that I find kind of wild, he says, Son of Man, can these bones live?

And if I'm Ezekiel, I'm thinking that is above my pay grade. I do not know. And so Ezekiel, I think he's on the same wavelength I am. He says, Sovereign Lord, you alone know and here is our first lesson about revival Revival comes not by Ezekiel's power or skill, it must come from God. Only God knows if these bones can live, because only God can make them live only God can make revival happen.

Now, I hope this brings us both humility and relief. We must submit to God's authority to be a part of revival but we also don't have to pretend that we can do it on our own or know what to do.

I heard a pastor reflect on God's power when speaking about a job he took where he was charged with saving a ministry from bankruptcy. He talked about how they had a set number of days. Let's say it was 100, to save the ministry and he worked so hard.

He spent all 100 days trying many different things to save the ministry, but at the end of the 100 days they were bankrupt and there's little to show for all the work he and his team had done. Now, many years after this experience he reflected as he talked to me that it may have been God's choice to close that ministry all along, and perhaps none of them had stopped to discern where God was calling them to do next.

Could God have saved it? Yeah, absolutely.

But, is it also up to God in his infinite wisdom to decide what to do? Yes, and like Scott and Annie have talked about in this series, This is why revival isn't us bringing our plan to God and saying hey I think you should do this, but instead is US praying and asking God what He would have us do.

Starting back in verse 4. Then he said to me, prophecy to these bones, and say to them, dry bones hear the word of the Lord. This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones. I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life 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.

All right, so here's the thing. I was prepping the sermon, reading the scripture a couple weeks ago and I went down a rabbit hole and I'm going to take you all down it with me.

As I read this passage. I began to wonder what are the functions of tendons and muscles and skin? What do they do for us? Why wouldn't God just tell the bones, hey stand up and get going, right? And so I did what any good pastor does while prepping a sermon, I did a quick Google search.

Now let me tell you what I learned with this caveat. Medical professionals, I needed this to fit in one paragraph, please forgive me, it is brief. All right, so tendons, I learned, act like springs that use energy to move us forward but also help to stabilize us. Where our muscles produce force and momentum and movement. Skin protects us. These seem like important things for a body, right?

All right, So Ezekiel prophesizes and he says bones stand up.

And they do. They stand up. They're formed. There's this wild rattling sound of wind and bones and tendons and muscles and skin form these bodies. The

whole valley, once filled with bones, now is filled with people standing, rebuilt by the power of God.

Much in the same way, when God brings revival into our lives, we are formed new. The Holy Spirit comes into us and fills these roles in our lives, the Holy Spirit acts like a spring that helps us to move forward to where God is calling us. The Holy Spirit stabilizes us so that we know who we are as children of God. The Holy Spirit produces force and momentum and movement as we are transformed. The Holy Spirit protects us because the Holy Spirit doesn't leave us in the state where it finds us. It empowers us to do something new, because revival is resurrection and resurrection means bringing something back to life.

It is a rebuilding or a renewal of who we are in God now. This requires an openness to change in our lives. Things will be different.

If I'm being honest, this is where I start to dig in my heels. I don't like change. I've said this here before. I like to do things the way I like to do them.

But if revival is bringing something back to life and adding something new, the Holy Spirit into me, I know that things will have to change.

And so it requires trusting God's plan for our lives, which I find easier to do when I see the great care that God used.

In creating the different systems of our body, the precision he took to make us to have healthy bodies makes me see that the God who cares that much about us surely has a good plan for my life and God's not even done yet because these bodies are upright.

But they are not fully living, they are not breathing yet and so God commands Ezekiel in verse 9. Prophecy to the breath prophecy, Son a man and say to it. This is what the Sovereign Lord says, come, breathe from the four winds, and breathe into those slain, that they may live. So I prophesied. As he commanded and breath entered them, they came to life and stood up on their feet.

Now the transformation of the Valley of Dry Bones to standing people is spectacular. But it came about simply an obedient man repeats the words that God told him to say and life is brought out of death, Ezekiel doesn't make it about himself. There's no Instagram Live.

There's no theatrics. There's no preachers and sneakers, There's no hot takes. There's obedience and humility because again, it is not about us, it is about God. Next, God tells Ezekiel that his people are like these dry bones believing that they are cut off in exile and without hope. And God tells him to go and tell them this prophecy that he has seen and to tell them that he will bring Israel back to their promised land and God goes on to explain to Ezekiel what will happen.

God will bring them out of exile and unite them together. A little bit of history for you. Before the exile, Israel had been split into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel, and God says not only will I bring you all back I will unify you again to be one people, because revival brings unification and God. We've mentioned in this Series A few times the Azusa St. revival.

A time in the 1900s when there was revival in the Los Angeles area and this revival is known for two main things. One experiences of the Holy Spirit through speaking of tongues and other wonders and signs as well as a very diverse congregation.

The survival where many people came to know Jesus was filled with Asian, Mexican, white and African American worshippers, this wasn't normal. For this time in history, people worship primarily with people who looked like them. But the holy Spirit doesn't believe our differences should keep us apart. The Holy Spirit calls us to be together.

As on earth as it is in heaven. Heaven brought down. Revelation tells us that in heaven every tribe and nation will worship together.

And when revival is rooted in the God who sees His image in all of us it will bring us together too, because revival brings heaven to earth by unifying us in Christ.

And I think that we need that just as much as the people did over 100 years ago, in a country where we are often so divided, a hallmark of true revival is that it unifies Christians across divisions in a way that only the Holy Spirit can.

Now the last thing that God tells Ezekiel in this passage that I want to highlight is why God does all of this. Is it to be impressive? No. Is it to prove he can? No, of course not. Is it to scare off their enemies? No. God tells Ezekiel that when he does this, though, the nations will know that it was God who did it?

Because return from exile isn't just about bringing Israel back, of course it is about that, but it's also about showing the world the power of God and that is

why revival comes with signs and wonders that may feel out of place in our World, Vision seen, dreams dreamed, people healed. Marriage is restored hearts changed because revival is resurrection.

That points to the power of God for the whole world to see. Now you may be wondering if revival can only come from God, what is my role here? What am I supposed to do? With all of this I have two action steps for us this week.

The first expect that God can do incredible things. Now this is easier said than done, but it is transformational. I wonder if you have a hope that you can't even imagine praying for because you believe it's impossible.

What would it look like to pray for it this week or to ask somebody else to pray for it for you. I would do it. Rich would do it, one of our prayer ministers, take a step in your faith to bring your heart to God and see what happens.

A few years ago there was a particular volunteer role that Mrs. Lisa, our preschool director, and I were trying to fill and it was an important role, but for a seemingly small group of people to allow them to come to worship, we needed to get a couple more volunteers and we asked a lot of people and we got a lot of no's for months and months we got a lot of Nos and it was discouraging.

Now please hear me, there are good reasons to say no. You should say no if a volunteer role isn't right for you or if it's not the right season. But we began to be discouraged and wondered if we would ever be able to find the right person and we contemplated giving up.

But both Lisa and I felt called to fill this role to help these families and to be honest with you several people told us that we should give up.

But what Lisa and I decided to do is we committed to praying every single week that God would bring the right people and that He would encourage us to believe that he would do so. So for months and months we prayed.

In total, at least a year that we were praying and asking people until one day Lisa emailed me she had a name, an idea, and I said yes, that is the right person.

She asked, and they said yes, and they've been serving in that role since. You see God provided the right people at the right time and it's not easy to expect big or difficult things from God, and His plans are not always our plans. But exercising our faith helps us to draw near to Him.

All right, our second action step, and I know this has been our step throughout this series so you must be getting good at it right, the next practice is to pray. And if you think you've prayed enough, you haven't. In fact, that's a sign that you haven't, but I wonder if there's a new way that you could pray this week and a place you don't normally pray or with your family or community group at a particular time. I've shared this before that I use my phone alarms to help me remember to do things throughout the day so I know if you were here Ash Wednesday, last time I preached, mid sermon my alarm went off to put my daughter to bed. I had to turn that off, but I use my phone alarms to help me to remember to do important things that I value, like bedtime.

But also like spending time with God because I know that otherwise I might forget, so maybe that is a tool that you try this week and one way or another, I encourage you to pray this week and if you don't know what to pray? Ask God to bring revival to different parts of your life. Your relationship, your work, your school, friendships, and our church and our city and our world. Pray for God to show you where he is at work and where he is inviting you to join him.

So God, we ask that you would pour out your spirit on us bring revival and only the way that you can. Help us to not miss what you are doing. Help us to see how you are working and believe that you are capable of bringing revival here. We pray these things in Jesus name, Amen.

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**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- Have you experienced revival?
- What is one thing you might practice this week to put yourself in a posture of openness to revival in your life? Our church? Your community?

- **Closing Question and Application:** Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?
- **Closing group prayer:** Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Take the challenging parts of your conversation to Jesus. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.