

An Order of Worship for the Home

July 26, 2020

Ezekiel: Visions of Hope – week 4

This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (Ezekiel 11:19b-20)

Reader 1: The Lord has promised to be our God.
Reader 2: The Lord has promised to make us His people.
Reader 1: We gather in the name of the Lord...
Reader 2: The God who is Father, Son and Spirit.
Together: Amen.

Psalm 119:105-107

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
¹⁰⁶ I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to keep your righteous rules.
¹⁰⁷ I am severely afflicted;
give me life, O Lord, according to your word!

Confession & Absolution

Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith. Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered.

“Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.” (Ezekiel 18:30b-32)

Christian Confessing: I confess that I have a stone heart. I don't love as I should. As a result, I don't act as I should. I don't speak as I should. I've hurt others. I've failed to help when given opportunity. Lord, forgive me and heal this heart of stone.

Christian Responding: Hear this promise: *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. (Ezekiel 36:25-27)* You are loved and forgiven! All these promises spoken through Ezekiel are yours in Jesus.

Together: Amen.

[John 11:17-27](#)

Please read from your own Bible. This is the gospel reading for today.

[Apostles' Creed](#)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

[Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know."⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord."

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live."¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹ 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.'¹² Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord."

Message **Speak Life**

My in-laws live on a couple acres not too far from Waco, Texas. When we visit, I like to explore some of the corners of the property and the tree covered hiding places with my kids. A couple years ago my son and I came across a bone. When we searched some more, we found a few deer bones scattered about the area. He wondered why the whole deer skeleton wasn't there, and we talked about how coyote, vultures and other scavengers probably scattered the carcass and these bones got left behind.

Scattered bones left to rot... Bones strewn about by scavengers and the effects of nature... That's the vision Ezekiel saw as he looked out on the valley before him. But these weren't animal bones. These were the bones of a defeated army left to rot and decay. They were dried out like those few deer bones my son and I found, which meant they'd been sitting for some time. This was a picture of Israel. This is the vision God gave to Ezekiel.

What was God saying in this picture? Something about Israel's restoration and new life... Something about Israel as an army; an army which had suffered defeat, but is ready to fight again... Something about a supernatural work which could only be done by the all-powerful God...

The vision is prophetic in that it looks ahead. It's a vision of what God *will* do. Therefore, the vision finds some level of fulfillment in the reestablishment of Jerusalem. The vision also finds limited fulfillment in the rebuilding of the temple.

Some Christians think we should look for a continued fulfillment through the modern nation of Israel, but that greatly misreads God's word and directs our attention to the wrong things. Instead, as you receive this vision with Ezekiel, recognize this is a vision given by the God who makes dead things live. Then, watch and see where he might do this kind of work. Expect to see him doing this work still. Listen to his word, and realize where he intends to do this work today.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins... But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (Ephesians 2:1,4-5)

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

The vision finds fulfillment in Israel's release from captivity. It also finds fulfillment in the spiritual resurrection God works when we are forgiven by grace. It even finds fulfillment on the last day when the dead in Christ are raised.

But all of these find meaning and power because God himself was dead, without the breath of life in him. Jesus was as dead as those dry bones. He allowed our defeat in battle to become his own. But our God proved his power over death when he rose from the dead on Easter morning. The breath of life entered his body once again, and the bonds of death were broken.

The vision Ezekiel saw finds true fulfillment because of the resurrection of Jesus. He is the God of new life. He makes dead things come alive. He restores his people to life.

When I see Ezekiel's vision in that light, do you know what really stands out to me? How it happens.

Let me explain.

Ezekiel is told to speak. He's told to proclaim God's word. That's what it means to prophecy; to declare what God has made known.

Speaking God's word is how healing begins.

Speaking God's word is how people are built up.

Speaking God's word is how the Spirit is given, and true life is restored.

Speaking God's word of life is exactly what you and I get to do! We have God's word. We declare that word to one another. We share that word in our marriages, our homes, our neighborhoods, and friendships. We speak life to one another and to this world.

Where there is death, we speak God's word of restoration and new life. We tell about the hope imbedded in this vision. Ezekiel was told to speak to the dead and dried out bones. That's not natural. That doesn't make sense. That can't change anything... unless the words spoken have the power of life; unless the words come from the God of life.

Now, you and I can and do speak life. To a dead marriage lacking any breath, we speak words of life and hope. To the skeleton of a once vibrant faith, we speak words of healing and restoration. To the person ravaged by scavengers of grief, depression, anxiety and loss we speak the gospel, and the Spirit of God enters with the refreshing hope of his presence.

When we speak God's word of promise, and restoration, and life...

...healing begins.

...people are built up.

...the Spirit is given, and true life is restored.

As a church family, we want to help one another get better at this. We want to learn to speak these words to one another, so we make space for that. Sundays are a part of this, but Sundays do not offer much space for putting this speaking into practice. I'm the only one who gets to speak. That's OK, but it highlights the fact that our life together needs to be more than just Sunday morning.

This is why we'll be starting some new online groups this fall. We're creating opportunities to speak God's word of life to one another. We're creating opportunities to invite friends into these conversations, so that we can speak this life-giving word to them as well. Watch for details in the coming weeks about a new women's Bible study, a fall Alpha course, and a new marriage course. Recognize that these are spaces for you to receive God's life-giving word much like you do on Sunday morning. Beyond that, these are also places where we learn to speak that word, and practice speaking that word.

We speak God's word because we really believe this word of God can make dead things live. We speak God's word because we need new life. We speak God's word because our friends, and family, and neighbors need new life.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved... (Ephesians 2:4-5)

And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live... (Ezekiel 37:13-14a)

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.

Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.

Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.

Reader 2: Receive our offerings.

Together: Receive us as your own.

Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing (adapted from Ezekiel 34:30-31, 23)

Reader 1: The Lord our God is with us.

Reader 2: We are His people.

Reader 1: We are His sheep.

Reader 2: He is our Shepherd.

Together: We will not be afraid. Amen.

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

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