

<sup>1</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> 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.”

<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.” <sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> 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.’ <sup>12</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> 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.”

Awhile back, I read about a national “Best Joke” contest. This was the winner:

Bill and John were best friends. One day they did what they often did: they went hunting. Suddenly, Bill grabbed his chest,

gasped, dropped to the ground, and fell over. John rushed over and examined him; he was horrified. Bill had just died of an apparent heart attack. John pulled out his cell phone, and, luckily, they were in range of a cell tower. He immediately called 911 and reported that his friend had just died.

The 911 Operator was well trained, and remained very calm. She tried to get John calm, as well. “OK,” she said. “The first thing we need to do is to make sure if he’s really dead.” There was a sudden silence on the other end of the line. Then the 911 operator heard a gun shot, and then another. Then John came back on the line, and said, “OK, what’s next?”

I think that joke won, not so much because of how good it was (or wasn’t, depending on your taste) but because it attempts to satisfy a need we have to somehow deflect us giving serious attention to death. [We don’t like to deal with death.](#)

I could perhaps prove the point (but I won’t) by **asking how many people here have not written a will** yet – but who keep putting it off. Or, perhaps, I could ask how many people here have [filled out the Funeral Pre-Plan Questionnaire that appears each month in the ReMarker](#)– to save your family from having to guess.

Nope. We don’t like to deal with death. And I’m pretty sure **that Ezekiel didn’t particularly enjoy this little escapade God treated him to**, as we just heard it read from the 37<sup>th</sup> chapter – the story of the field of Dry Bones.

But, nonetheless, here is the priest Ezekiel, after the fall of Judah, after the destruction of the Temple, and being held as a prisoner of Babylon. And suddenly he is caught up in the *Ruah* (that Hebrew word for the wind, for the Spirit of God) and taken to this valley of Dry Bones.

There is a reality check! Not just dead people, but dry, long since dead, bones.

Laurence Hull Stookey, the recently deceased Bible Professor and scholar (as well as brother to Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul and Mary) commented on this passage: *“The Almighty does not do stunts to impress or entertain us.”* God is always, throughout all the miraculous deeds in the Bible seeking to always reconcile us – to God and to one another, like (as Jesus would later say) *a Mother Hen longing to gather her chicks under her wings.*

The reality is – regardless of how much we practice denial – the sermon title is right: *There IS a stainless steel table for us all.* Just like the real embalming table that is in our worship display today, with those dry bones resting upon it.

It’s a reminder to all of us – just like the cloistered monks’ devotional practice of lying down to sleep at night with their hands folded across their chest, in the posture they will be when laid out in the casket by the undertaker.

We’re all going to go.

The question is HOW are we going to go.

Exekiel, in this vision, is asked the question: *“Son of man, can these bones live?”* And, out of an abundance of caution, not sure how to answer the Almighty, Who has just taken him to this terrible place, he hedges his bets and meekly says: *“O Lord GOD, you know.”*

BINGO! Right Answer!!

Even after the miraculous and terribly noisy joining together of the bones, with muscle and sinew and skin, even then **THERE IS NO LIFE.**

The LIFE comes from the same power that brought Ezekiel to this place, ... the same power that caused life to come into the first man, Adam: *“the breath came into them, and they lived.”*

- ❖ ***“The Almighty does not do stunts to impress or entertain us.”***
- ❖ ***There is a Stainless Steel Table for All of us!***
- ❖ What are we going to do about it?
- ❖ What are we going to make of our lives?

Ezekiel can only see a big, big, big valley of dry bones. God sees the makings of a mighty army.

Can we see the potential in our lives that God does?

**It boils down to this, my friends. It boils down to a matter of trust.  
DO WE TRUST GOD TO MAKE GOOD ON GOD’S PROMISES?**

**No situation is too hopeless for God’s power to not redeem. We peek forward just a couple of weeks, and we know what’s coming: RESURRECTION!**

**Can we really believe? Can we really trust?**

Much of our lives are spent in a contest between trusting in God’s promises and trusting in our own selves, and, at the same time, doubting God.

We say we believe Jesus’ word: **“Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth,”** (Matthew 6:19.) But how many of us spend so much of our time doing the opposite, and, at the same time, continuing to always worry that we don’t have enough?

**It boils down to this, my friends: It boils down to a matter of trust.  
DO WE TRUST GOD TO MAKE GOOD ON GOD’S PROMISES?**

**No situation is too hopeless for God’s power to not redeem. We peek forward in the calendar a couple of weeks, and we know what’s coming: RESURRECTION!**

**Can we really believe? Can we really trust?**

Can we remember just how faithful God has already been in our lives?  
**What will it take for us to voluntarily we begin to trust?** Not just falling back onto it when we have no choice?

**Fred Craddock**, one of America's finest preachers and teachers of preachers, told a story about preaching in a university church in Norman, Oklahoma, some years ago, He said:

... a young woman came up after the service. I had preached on Mark 1, the call of the disciples. She came up and said she wanted to talk with me, and said, **"I'm in med school here, and that sermon clinched what I've been struggling with for some time."**

**"What's that?"**

**"Dropping out of med school."**

**"What do you want to do that for?"**

She said she was going to go work in the Rio Grande Valley. She said, **"I believe that's what God wants me to do."** She quit med school, went to the Rio Grande Valley, sleeps under a piece of tin in the back of a pickup truck, and teaches little children while their parents are out in the field. She dropped out of med school for this, and her folks back in Montana are saying, **"What in the world happened?"**

And I was saying to them, **"Well, now, I was just preaching. I didn't mean to, you know...."**

Well, today, **I'm just preaching**. I'm not telling you what to do.

**All I can say is this**: You and I have a stainless steel table in our future. God's got a plan for how we can best spend what we have left before that table's under our back side. Are you willing to listen to what God has in mind? Has God been faithful to you up to this point? Are you willing to **trust** what God wants you to do? Your call. Let us pray.