

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. 2He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. 3He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know." 4Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. 5Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. 6I will lay sinews on 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." 7So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. 8I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. 9Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." 10I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. 11Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' 12Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 13And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. 14I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act," says the Lord.

"With God all things are possible."

Is it true? What do you think? Are all things possible, with God?

Could God make me fly right now? Flap my arms and glide around the room? Like Peter Pan but without the wires? My guess is that most every one of you here today would say, "If God wanted to do that, God could do that." The question is why would God want me to fly? Possible? I would say yes. Likely? Certainly not.

"With God all things are possible." Do you believe it? Sure. It costs me nothing to believe that. And my belief will never be proven wrong this side of the grave, because with every disappointment I can say, "But God didn't want it."

One day a man named Ezekiel had a vision. He writes: "The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many and they were very dry. He said to me, 'Mortal, can these bones live?'" I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.'

Ezekiel was no fool. He was not going to answer that question. He knew that all things were possible with God, but not all things are likely. Can dry bones live? Only God knows.

Then the Lord said to Ezekiel, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord'. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on 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.'" "

And in the vision that is exactly what happened. Bones came together, and tendons and muscles, and skin and finally breath and dry bones became a great host of people.

Could God do that? Of course, I answer. God could go out and open all the graves and make a magic no movie has ever produced. Decay reversed, death reversed, life again for the dead. Christians believe that the dead shall live once more, like Jesus on the Easter morning. "With God all things are possible."

Had God sent Ezekiel out with that message, that God could raise the dead, Ezekiel's job would have been easy. But listen to what the Lord said:

"Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.'" "

Ezekiel was not being sent to dead people, but to people without hope. They had been defeated; they had been forced to leave their own land and culture and had been taken to the land of their captors. They were without power; their God seemed as powerless as they.

God told Ezekiel, "Therefore prophecy and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel."

God was going to take this people dead in their hopelessness and make them alive, return them to the land they never thought they would see again.

Only one thing could stand in their way: themselves.

"With God all things are possible." But would a hopeless people have hope, and take the risk to journey home? Would they start over again, or would they be so used to life in Babylon that they would refuse to go home? "With God all things are possible." But would God's people believe not just with their words and minds, but would they believe with their lives.

Do you believe all things are possible with God? If we are talking miracle, "Poof!" and our world is changed. An "A" on the test I never studied for, a prayer and pain gone, some promises to God and our whole life changed, yes, we'd all like it if life were like that.

But it was a long walk between Babylon and Israel - a long journey from the prosperous streets of Babylonian cities to the rural poverty of Israel. God would bring life to dry bones, yes, but Babylon had to be left behind.

I think a great many of us have some long journeys to take. We know the journey will be too great on our own. Our Lord is waiting to bring new life to our dry bones. Our Lord promises strength and hope and courage along the way. What is impossible for us will become reality through the power of God. But we will have to leave Babylon behind. And trust in God and God's guidance in every day and every hour.

God has called us here together for this journey. I am not alone, but God gives me you as I trust in God's power to bring me to a new land. You are not alone, all you will need God will provide in this community of faith.

The graves of hopelessness will open. God will raise new life in you here and now already, a sign of that perfect new life that Jesus has prepared for you forever.

€ ² ŷŷ ŷŷŷŷŷŷŷŷŷ ŷ ŷ ŷ ŷ ŷ □ ? -
ŷ 1¾ « ²
€ ï ŷŷò n 7 nª n -
n n° n : n ç n ! n³ n ?
n M
n "

n °

n ó

n ž n

< - Đ à Ž n n n n ± n² ÿÿ³ ÿÿ^o n : n ç n !
n M
n "

n °

n ó

n ž n

< - Ð à Ò à=Ð/ÿÿ Ø6Ð 0*

€ 3 ÿÿÿÿ

° ß