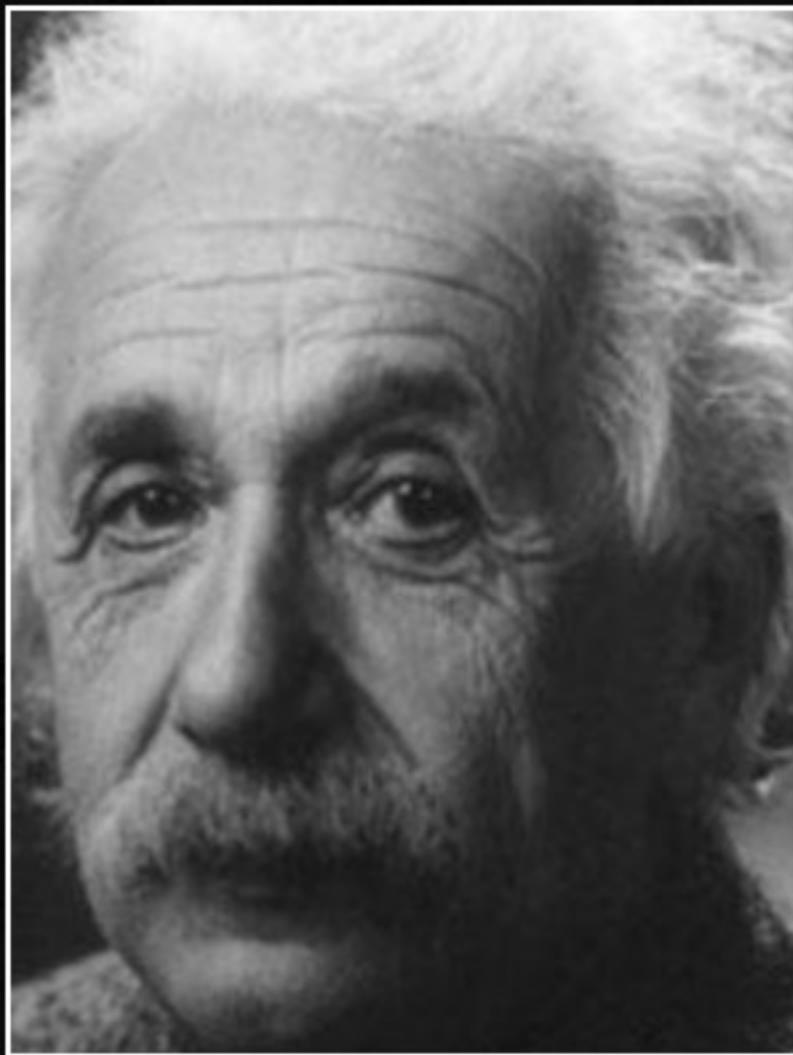
A pile of dry, bleached bones scattered on a dark, textured surface. The bones are various sizes and shapes, some appearing as long shafts and others as smaller fragments. The background is dark and grainy, suggesting a natural or archaeological setting.

**Can these dry
bones live?**

Ezekiel 37



Do you believe in miracles? Well, you should. In fact, life itself is a big miracle.

There are so many things that are beyond our understanding. There are two ways to live: you can live as if nothing is a miracle; you can live as if everything is a miracle.

— *Albert Einstein* —

AZ QUOTES

“Breathe”

March 29, 2020

Ezekiel 37:1 – 14

In this 5th week of Lent, we will be looking together at the story of the Valley of Dry Bones. Ezekiel is an interesting prophet to read. He was, by far, the most peculiar prophet we have in the Bible. And this is in large part because God calls Ezekiel to use dramatization and actions or a sort of “performance art” to demonstrate the prophetic message to those whom he prophesied. Many prophets in the Hebrew scriptures use this form of sharing prophecy, but no one as dramatic or as often as Ezekiel.

Background

As a prelude here is a podcast by Daniel and three other ministers discussing the scriptural text. (click on the link while depressing the ctrl key).

https://faithement.net/?powerpress_pinw=15266-podcast

An additional extra, background resource is this magazine article “We Need to Read the Bible Jesus Read.” It contends “the Old Testament is vital for understanding the New Testament. *It’s also indispensable all by itself* (emphasis added).

(click on the link while depressing the ctrl key).

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/february-web-only/old-first-testament-bible-jesus-read.html?share=12Y8S8QixhizNiJyF6gmzm6hJOE9Gr5i>

I.

Just for fun

“Dry Bones” by the Delta Rhythm Boys

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVoPG9HtYF8>

(click on the link while depressing the ctrl key).

II.

Ezekiel 37: 1-14

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, “Prophesy 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, “Prophesy 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.

III.

View Nikki Carroll Hardeman’s Video

(7:41)

<https://faithlab.sharefile.com/share/view/s95161bcb68142668>

(Click on the link while depressing the ctrl key then click on “download. It will take less than one minute.)

IV.

The message of this passage seems pretty straightforward to me. As Cecil Sherman might say, just three points:

1. The Jewish people, through their disobedience to Jehovah, found themselves captive in a foreign land (Babylon) and had lost hope.
2. Ezekiel delivered a message he received from God, namely though they may feel abandoned, God had not forgotten them.
3. No matter how abandoned or badly we may feel, God can breathe new life into us.

Dan Bagby, with his gift of pastoral care, is preaching this Sunday from this text. He will surely have more and deeper insights. Meanwhile, let's reflect on our personal reaction to the story.

Two sets of questions for reflection



- Why do you think the "dem bones" song became so popular, given the seriousness of this passage? This passage has been described as "[performance art](#)". Does "performance art," like Ezekiel's prophecies and others carry much weight for you? Why do you think God employed it? (Vs. 1 says "the hand of the Lord came upon me" which leads many scholars to believe this was a vision of Ezekiel, not a literal occurrence.) Once we are out of this state of self-quarantine, can you imagine some sort of "performances" we might be called upon to make?



- While we are reading this material in the face of a pandemic, of what have you been the most afraid in the past and why? How does it compare to today's climate? What was the outcome of that fear? How was it resolved? What lessons from that experience could you draw on today?

If you read the magazine article, "[Why We Need to Read the Bible Jesus Read](#)", you may recall the first reason given was "honesty." The Old Testament, Ezekiel included, has some harsh stories, messages, and images. In this case the image is of a whole people looking like a large valley, strewn with lost bones bleached by the sun as far as the eye can see. This harsh, honest image stands in vivid contrast to the promise of new life, in this case, back home in a flourishing Israel.

V.
A Closing Hymn
“Come Alive” by Lauren Dingle

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7XAeyFagceQ>

*Through the eyes of men
It seems there's so much
We have lost*

*As we look down the road
Where all the prodigals
Have walked
And one by one
The enemy has whispered lies
And led them off as slaves*

*But we know that You are God
Yours is the victory
We know there is more to come
That we may not yet see
So with the faith You've given us
We'll step into the valley unafraid, yeah*

*As we call out to dry bones
Come alive, come alive
And we call out to dead hearts
Come alive, come alive
Come up out of the ashes
Let us see an army rise
We call out to dry bones come alive*

*Oh God of endless mercy
God of unrelenting love
Rescue every daughter
Bring us back the wayward son
By Your spirit breathe upon them
Show that You alone can save
You alone can save*

*As we call out to dry bones
Come alive, come alive
And we call out to dead hearts
Come alive, come alive
Come up out of the ashes
Let us see an army rise
We call out to dry bones come alive, Yeah*

So breathe, oh breath of God

*Now breathe, breath of God
Breathe oh breath of God
Now breathe*

*Oh breathe, breath of God
Now breathe, oh breath of God
Breathe, oh breath of God, now breathe*

*As we call out to dry bones
Come alive, come alive
And we call out to dead hearts
Come alive, come alive*

*Come up out of the ashes
Let us see an army rise
We call out to dry bones come alive, Yeah
We call out to dry bones...come alive*

שָׁלוֹם

(Shalom)