

**Sunday August 29, 2021**

## **Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church**

### **Outstanding**

### **Sermon Video**

### **Welcome & Prayer (Greg W)**

It is unfortunate that we can't meet together in person this morning but God's Church is the people not the building. Today we are continuing our sermon series in Ezekiel and in chapter 37 we find that the nation of Israel is so far down and devoid of hope that they are compared to a valley of dry bones. But there is still hope for them if they look to the Lord their God. And there is hope for us too if we too trust in the Lord Jesus.

Jeremiah 29 says, 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. '" Let's pray

*"Almighty God you are worthy to receive honour and glory and power for you created all things, the seen and the unseen and by your will they were created and have their being. Thank you Lord, that you created us in your own image and called us to be your children. Thank you that while we were still sinners you softened our hearts and gave us new life. We pray that we will worship you, endlessly giving thanks for your gracious gift of salvation purchased by the precious gift of your son's death on the cross. We give you our praise that Jesus submitted to your will and gave his life on the cross as an atonement for our sins, past, present and future. We acknowledged as Romans 3 tells us "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and all are saved by redemption through the grace of our Lord Jesus. We pray Lord that as we have been redeemed at such a price that we will live lives that bring glory to you that evidence our gratefulness at being redeemed. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we may be sanctified and moulded into the likeness of Christ. For those times we have tried to be rulers of our own lives and have sinned against you in thought and deed, we ask for your forgiveness. We know Lord that you are God that is slow to anger and abounding in love and seeks to be in a relationship with us. We thank you that even though we continue to struggle with sin in our lives, your grace is enough for us to stay in relationship with you and continue to call you father. We pray all of these things in the name of our son, Jesus Christ, Amen.*

### **Song – Only a Holy God**

[Only A Holy God- City Alight - YouTube](#)

1. Who else commands all the hosts of heaven  
Who else could make every king bow down  
Who else can whisper and darkness trembles  
Only a Holy God  
What other beauty demands such praises  
What other splendour outshines the sun  
What other majesty rules with justice  
Only a Holy God

2. What other glory consumes like fire  
What other power can raise the dead  
What other name remains undefeated  
Only a Holy God  
Refrain

3. Who else could rescue me from my failing  
Who else would offer His only Son  
Who else invites me to call Him Father  
Only a Holy God

Refrain Come and behold Him  
The One and the Only  
Cry out, sing holy  
Forever a Holy God  
Come and worship the Holy God

Refrain

## Bible Reading – Ezekiel 37:1-14 (NIV)

*"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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know."*

*<sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!*

*<sup>5</sup>This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup>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."*

*<sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.*

*<sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.'" <sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.*

*<sup>11</sup>Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. <sup>14</sup>I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD."*

## Announcements

**Outreach Service.** We welcome everyone to our services today and a special welcome to those who have come (or are watching) because you were invited to do so. We pray that the message from God's word today will indeed give you hope in the midst of a world where hope is in short supply. Please contact us at [sktaylor1997@gmail.com](mailto:sktaylor1997@gmail.com) if you have any questions or comments as a result of today's service.

**COVID.** With COVID cases so high, we as a Church want to do everything possible to keep our people safe. That means in lockdown we will not have Church services or meetings. Once the lockdown conditions are eased we will follow all the advice from NSW Health and will continue encourage everyone to use QR codes when on Church premises, keep social distancing rules stay away if you have cough or flu like symptoms. And please keep praying.

**Keeping in Touch.** Have your organised your Church buddy to keep in touch with? It is so important that we all play a part in caring for one another. Over the last 18 months the work of the church has fallen heavily on our key members. Now is the time to us all to play our part in helping care for one another in these difficult times.

**Hunter Men's Convention.** Has been cancelled this year because of COVID. Simon Manchester has agreed to speak next year on the book of Ezekiel.

**Kamal Weerakoon** is planning to visit us as a Church on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 7-9pm. This is too has been cancelled but he will still link up with the youth group via zoom.

**Work Day** for next Saturday as also been cancelled.

**Last chance for Father's Day.** It is a week until Father's Day. Stuck for ideas? Stuff that new pair of socks with the ultimate sock-filler -- a jerry can of fuel that helps save lives. MAF has been flying food, medical aid, health workers, missionaries and God's Word into the most remote parts of the planet for more than

75 years. Keep the planes in the air by giving a gift that makes a difference to people who need it. Talk to Sam Collyer (0405 566 273 or samcollyer@outlook.com) for more information.

**Lords Supper.** We plan to have the Lords Supper next week but it will obviously depend upon what happens with COVID this few days. If we are meeting together we will go back to individual communion elements. If we are at home, we might still have the Lords Supper but with our own bread/juice.

**Sad news.** Recently two of our older members Shirley Levido and Amy Huang have passed away. Our thoughts and prayers go to their families who have to organized funeral services in COVID times.

## Family Matters. <https://youtu.be/jjdfTuBKWmU>

Today Paul Barnes is going to tell us about the way that God brought him to Himself through the work of Christ.

## Song – O breathe of life [O Breath Of Life \(Acoustic Song Leading Video\) // Emu Music - YouTube](#)

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|---|--|
| <p>1. O Breath of life, come sweeping through us,<br/>Revive Your church with life and power.<br/>O Breath of life, come, cleanse, renew us,<br/>And fit Your church to meet this hour.</p> | <p>4. O Breath of love, come breathe within,<br/>Renewing thought and will and heart;<br/>Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win,<br/>Revive Your church in every part.</p>     |
| <p>2. O Breath of love, come breathe within,<br/>Renewing thought and will and heart;<br/>Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win,<br/>Revive Your church in every part.</p>                    | <p>5. Revive us, Lord! Is zeal abating<br/>While harvest fields are vast and ripe?<br/>Revive us, Lord, the world is waiting,<br/>Equip Your church to spread the light.</p> |
| <p>3. O Wind of God, come bend us, break us,<br/>Till humbly we confess our need;<br/>Then in Your tenderness remake us,<br/>Revive, restore, for this we plead.</p>                        | <p>6. O Breath of love, come breathe within,<br/>Renewing thought and will and heart;<br/>Come, Love of Christ, afresh to win,<br/>Revive Your church in every part.</p>     |

## Pastoral Prayer Points.

**Psalm 113:** “The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens!” (v. 4). Isn’t it great to know our politicians aren’t ultimately in control! The Lord is high and lifted up. The Lord is on the throne of the universe. Yet he stoops down and visits the poor and needy. We see this perfectly in Jesus Christ who was God in flesh. And who came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). This is the God we worship! From the rising of the sun to the setting, the name fo the Lord is to be praised!

**Pray for Australia.** Our country has been gripped by fear of late. And many people are looking to our politicians for salvation. Pray that God would have mercy and stoop down to help needy Australians. Pray the nation would turn its eyes upon Jesus. Pray for the spread of the virus to be stopped.

**Pray for HSC students.** Continue to pray for Phoebe Baldwin, Maddy Hearn, Coel Mulready, Yvette Chesterfield, James Hakwa, Will Homer, Wyeth Scott, Peter Hyslop, Heath Brown. Pray for strength during this uncertain times. Pray for peace in the midst of all the stress. Pray this would be a time of when their trust in God deepens.

**Pray for Churches** – Pray for leaders in churches who have to navigate the ship in stormy conditions. Pray that leaders eyes would be fixed on Christ and they would not sink under the waves. But be filled with the Holy Spirit and continue to proclaim God’s word.

**Pray for Personal and Family** – Pray for marriages. These times can be very testing. Pray that marriages would come out the end stronger. Pray for unbelieving spouses to be drawn to Christ during this time of crisis.

## Bible Reading – Ephesians 2:1-10 (NIV)

*“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,<sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.<sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,<sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.<sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.<sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”*

## Sermon – Living with Hope (Stephen T) [https://youtu.be/l6pxcdXiT\\_I](https://youtu.be/l6pxcdXiT_I)

It was only a couple of years ago that Australia experienced one of the worst droughts on record. The rainfall dropped to almost nothing. The pastures went from green to brown to just dirt. The crops and animals began to die. And the hopes of a nation began to fall. A sort of depression gripped the whole continent.

Slide 2

While it was toughest for the farmers and the people from the country whose dams dried up and they had to watch their livelihoods and the lifeblood of the towns slowly die. It was also hard for the rest of us. Our news programmes brought the devastation to our living rooms. Our economy started to buckle, prices were on the increase, unemployment grew and as the grip of drought strengthened, our mood began to get darker as well.

We all knew what was needed. Rain. And plenty of it. And soon. We all knew that rain would come some time in some quantity. But when would it come? And how widespread would it be? And had climate change changed everything so much that this might become the new normal rather than the exception to the rule?

Slide 3

And then suddenly it came. Rain. Glorious rain. It wet the earth, it filled the dams. It put a smile on our faces. And when we got enough of it. We saw life come back to the regions. In a matter of months everything moved from death to life. From gloom to joy. It is amazing what one desperately needed element can do. For Australia rain changed everything.

And in Ezekiel 37 we find ourselves in an even worse situation. A place where there is no life. And no hope. And the people of Ezekiel’s time also need one element desperately but it is not rain. It is God Himself. God needs to step in and do something. God is their only hope. And God can do something but the question is **will he do something?** Does **he want to do something?** Well let’s have a look, shall we?

Slide 4

### 1. No Hope (verses 1-2)

*“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.<sup>2</sup> 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.”*

Slide 5

Now what a gruesome sight. Ezekiel is literally picked up and placed in the middle of Death Valley. Ezekiel is given a tour of a massive graveyard, except none of these bodies have been buried. It is probably the site of a battle where the armies of Israel have been devastated. And there are bones as far as the eye can see.

Not skeletons still relatively intact but scattered, separated bones showing that the defeat was so humiliating that no one had been able to come back and bury the dead. And so, the bodies had been left to the birds and wild beasts.

It's a complete and utter tragedy. A place where there is no hope. I think the closest parallel that you & I might have seen would be a picture of no man's land in WW1. Or maybe bodies piled high in a gas chamber. Or images of hundreds of bloated corpses after a Tsunami. Whenever I see images like this I shudder. This is horrendous. This is tragic. This is hopeless.

Slide 6

So we have this powerful image before us and it is pointing to a terrible truth. That is explained to Ezekiel in verse 11. <sup>11</sup>"Then he said to me: "Son of man, **these bones are the people of Israel**. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and **our hope is gone**; we are cut off.'"

Before us then is a scene of God's people. At this point in the book of Ezekiel they have been under God's judgement for 12 years. They have been removed from their homes, their country, their livelihoods. The city of Jerusalem was subsequently destroyed. The Temple raised and they are now slaves in a foreign land. And even though Ezekiel has been preaching to them for 6 years they are like those bones. Scattered. Separated. Hopeless.

And if that is the state for God's people, then it must be even worse for everyone else. At least God's people received God's favour in the past. And he had sent them kings and priests and prophets throughout their history. But now even they have no hope. Death is their destiny. They are just like dry bones scattered around Death Valley.

Slide 7

Existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre once put it this way: "*Man can count on no one but himself; he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities, without help, with no other aim than the one he sets himself, with no other destiny than the one he forges for himself on this earth.*" Now that's pretty depressing, isn't it?

Slide 8

And the New Testament says something similar about us. "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions & sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world & of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh & following its desires & thoughts. Like the rest we were by nature deserving of wrath*"

So this is not just a picture of a terrible drought or a nation who has turned away from their God, it is a picture of us. A not so flattering picture of you & me. We have all turned our backs on the Lord. We have all gone our own way. We have all taken the highway to hell or at least gone in the direction of death valley.

Slide 9

We put our hope in relationships and the people around us let us down. We put our trust in money and it doesn't buy any of the things that truly satisfy. We look to sport or careers or houses to find meaning in life and it just doesn't work. And we all need to face the fact that we will die and that everything we have built for ourselves will disappear. And you can see it and smell it at the moment. A growing hopelessness. Life isn't taking us where we really want to go & not keeping us there either. But when things are at their lowest ebb, God intervenes. Offering Ezekiel's readers

Slide 10

## 2. New Hope (verses 3-10)

But not straight away. It happens in three stages. For firstly the Lord poses a question to the prophet Ezekiel. <sup>3</sup>"He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "Sovereign LORD, you alone know." Can these bones live? Duh! The obvious answer is No! Of course, they

can't live at all. Nothing can bring them back to life. They are dead.

Slide 11

In the words of the famous Monty Python sketch about the Dead parrot. *"This parrot is no more! He has ceased to be! 'E's expired & gone to meet 'is maker! 'E's a stiff! Bereft of life, 'e rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed 'im to the perch 'e'd be pushing up the daisies! 'Is metabolic processes are now 'istory! 'E's off the twig! 'E's kicked the bucket, 'e's shuffled off 'is mortal coil, run down the curtain and joined the bleedin' choir invisible!! THIS IS AN EX-PARROT!!"*

But. But Ezekiel has been given a question by God. He has heard God speak to Him. And so he doesn't give God the obvious answer. "No Lord, these bones can't live". Because He has a relationship with God. He knows how strong and powerful God is. He's convinced that God is the God of life and death. So just as He in the past brought people back to life through the ministries of the prophets Elijah & Elisha. God is able to even bring life to these bones

Slide 12

But does God want to? That's the real question. So, Ezekiel hedges his bets with his answer: *"Sovereign LORD, you alone know."* Lord God you are the only one can do such a thing and I don't really know whether you want to give these guys another chance. So, you alone know.

Yes, God does know. And yes God can bring new life to these bones. And so, the Lord says to Ezekiel, <sup>4</sup> *"Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! <sup>5</sup>This is what the Sovereign LORD says to these bones: I will make breathe enter you, and you will come to life. <sup>6</sup>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."*

What a crazy thing to ask Ezekiel to do? The Lord doesn't ask him to give these bones a decent burial, to show these people some respect at last. Nor does the Lord ask Ezekiel to preach to the people around them & warn them of the dangers of forgetting about the Lord. The Lord instead tells him, commands him to preach, to preach to these dry, lifeless bones!

Poor Ezekiel, as a preacher I know it is bad enough to preach to people who occasionally fall asleep while you are speaking but to preach to the dead. What a waste of time. And you would hope that no one was watching him do such a hopeless task.

Slide 13

And yet the word of God contains in it life. And the word of God gives life. And what these bones lack was life and so Ezekiel does what he is told. <sup>7</sup> *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. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them."*

Slide 14

Ezekiel preached. With ordinary words. No magic. No tricks up his sleeve. Just the living power of the word of the living God and the bones begin to stir. In the words of the old Negro Spiritual "the leg bone connected to the knee bone, the knee bone connected to the thigh bone, the thigh bone connected to the hip bone" The bones hear the word of the Lord

And you and I need to remember that. There is power in the word of the Lord. It may seem old fashioned. It may seem out of date. Its conclusions might seem on the wrong side of history. But God's word changes its hearers, even when they don't have ears to hear like these skeletons! But the bodies are still dead. You see the word of God is the way that God's power is unleashed onto God's world but it needs something else, God's Spirit.

Slide 15

<sup>9</sup>“Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into these slain, that they may live.’” <sup>10</sup>So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.”

Slide 16

Life, comes from a combination of God's word and God's Spirit. As they work together in unison lives are changed. Eternities are secured. Bones and flesh come back to life.

Today we think we are the ones who can secure life for ourselves. If we just lose enough weight, if we gain some more money, if we go on that holiday or tick off that activity from our bucket list, we will learn how to live, really live. But it is our creator that breathed life in us in the very beginning and it our Saviour who can fill the hopeless with hope, the lifeless with life. In the same way that in Genesis 2 the Lord formed the man and the woman out of the dust of the earth and then breathed life into their nostrils, it is the Lord alone who can make us whole and it is the Lord alone who can give us life, life to the full, eternal life.

Slide 17

And so there before Ezekiel is a living, breathing, army of the Lords followers. You see when the resurrected bones come together they become an army not a debating club or a beach party. The Lord raises his people for a purpose. They are dressed in the armour of God and they are there to serve and fight for their heavenly commander.

For when God brings life, he also brings purpose. When God raises up people he gives them a most important task. Having been fueled by the word of God and having be filled by the Spirit of God they are sent out to do God's work. They are not a standing army but an active army ready to go and do whatever their commander in chief calls them to do.

Slide 18

In the words of Spurgeon “*Decayed Churches can most certainly be revived by the preaching of the Word accompanied by the coming of the heavenly breathe.*” The Word and the Spirit can change the individual, the Church, the society and the world. At times what we are called to do seems to be so old fashioned, so dated and yet it is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. So it is our job to proclaim and its God's job to claim. Our job to preach and God's job to reach. Our job is to witness and God's job to bring forgiveness.

So where there once was no hope, God's word and God's Spirit bring new hope. Where there once was no life, God's word and God's Spirit brings new life.

Slide 19

### 3. New Life (verses 11-14)

<sup>11</sup>Then he said to me: “Son of man, these bones are the people of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.’ Therefore prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. *Slide 20* 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 own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.’”

The Lord is the one who can turn death into life, rigor mortis into resurrection. New life is not just reformation but transformation. It is not just resuscitation it is resurrection. And it comes to those who were previously dead **as a gift of grace.**

Slide 21

Think about it? Those bones, didn't do anything to be brought back to life, they were not just as good as dead, they were dead. And so the only way they are going to be brought back to life is through the power

of God. And that's what God wants to do for his people. He wants to bring life to the lifeless. He wants to give hope to the hopeless. He wants to bring the prodigal home and he wants to draw those who are far away back into his embrace.

Slide 22

So the picture that this passage ends with here is that of life and land. You have your place in this world. A place where you belong. A home where you are safe and secure. And that is because God puts his Spirit within us. He takes up residence within us. We are now never alone. We are now never on our own. We are now never unequipped for the task at hand. For the one who made life and controls life is with us enabling us to enjoy life, life to the full.

In our passage we are seeing the impossible become possible. Israel, dried up & abandoned because of their sin, would find God's restoration and life once more. God will open their graves, put them in their own land, put His Spirit within them and all of this because God loves them.

But let me ask you one final question. When, when will this happen? Or when did it happen? When do we see the dead come back to life? When do we see the Spirit of God unleashed on his people? When does God's word bring that sort of transformation to God's people?

Slide 23

Well, we see it in the life of Jesus, don't we? At the town gate of the village of Nain Jesus met a funeral procession. The only son of a widow had died and they were taking him out for burial. But Jesus raised him from the dead and gave him back to his mother (Luke 7). And then in John's gospel we have Jairus come to seek help from Jesus because his daughter was sick but Jesus got there too late, for she was now dead. But he wasn't really too late, he took her by the hand and said "My child get up." And she was raised to life again.

Slide 24

And then there was Lazarus in the tomb for four days and yet Jesus rolls the stone away and tells him to come out and out he comes with his grave clothes still wrapped around him. And then Jesus says "*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.*" Lazarus is alive, ALIVE!

Slide 25

Jesus has the power over life and death. Jesus, God's Son can bring about a resurrection for others and then for himself. Because on the third day he too rose from dead. After taking on the sins of the world. After ascending to the world of the dead. After staying in the grave three whole days. Jesus comes back from the dead. And he says to those who believe in him. "*Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.*"

You get it? The word of God and the Spirit of God not only raised Jesus from the dead. But anyone who is connected with Christ, in Christ, trusting in their salvation through Christ they also get it to live. They get a place called home. They get God's Spirit to live within them. The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is available to us.

Slide 26

And so when Jesus was raised from the dead, in an echo to Ezekiel 37, he comes into a locked room and he breathes on his followers. And he says "Receive the Holy Spirit." In the words of preacher Christopher Wright "*The Lord of life himself, freshly risen to his feet from where he had lain among the bones of the dead, adopts simultaneously the posture of God Himself in commanding the breath of the Spirit to come upon the disciples.*"

#### 4. A living Hope



Jesus in his grace offers to us his disciples not just life but hope. A living hope. A hope that is strong enough to trust in the midst of the darkest days. And a life that is wonderful enough to bring direction to even the most difficult times. A hope of life that works for both the life to come and the life we live right now. A hope that spills into our home situation, our work situation, our COVID situation, in fact every situation.

Slide 27

You might look around you & see just dead bones – the stuff going on all around is beyond help and beyond hope. But the word of God has the power to bring us hope. And the Spirit of God has power to give us life and the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified for sin and raised from the dead, can actually bring us both, a living hope. It can raise the dead. It can unstop deaf ears, it can open blind eyes, it can give you and I hope even in the most hopeless of situations.

So, can these bones come to life? Well, what do you think? Let me tell you what I think. I think God has proved he has the power to bring these bones to life and he has shown us that He loves us so much that he desire to bring these bones to life. So, if we would only open ourselves up to God's Word. If we would only open ourselves up to the Spirit of God and if we would only allow Jesus Christ to give us the life and the hope we desire. We will see the dead bones of our life recreated and resurrected. And that would give us hope.

Slide 28

I was reading recently the story of a U.S. bishop who visited a local church in California and who found a stirring red and orange banner on the wall. **"Come Holy Spirit. Hallelujah!"** was printed in large letters under a picture of a fire burning. But the bishop was also interested in the sign directly underneath the banner which said: "Fire extinguisher." And he thought isn't it true that often what we do extinguishes the work of God & puts out God's fire!

Well, what about you and me? Are we open to the work of God? Are we open to the word of God? Are we willing to let him come in and bring these dry bones to life? And set our lives on fire? Well, that is a question only you can answer.

## Song – In Christ Alone

[In Christ Alone \(Official Lyric Video\) - Keith & Kristyn Getty.](#)

[Alison Krauss - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. In Christ alone my hope is found<br/>He is my light, my strength, my song<br/>This cornerstone, this solid ground<br/>Firm through the fiercest drought and storm<br/>What heights of love, what depths of peace<br/>When fears are stilled, when strivings cease<br/>My comforter, my all in all<br/>Here in the love of Christ I stand</p> | <p>3. There in the ground His body lay<br/>Light of the world by darkness slain<br/>Then bursting forth in glorious day<br/>Up from the grave He rose again<br/>And as He stands in victory<br/>Sin's curse has lost its grip on me<br/>For I am His and He is mine<br/>Bought with the precious blood of Christ</p>  |
| <p>2. In Christ alone who took on flesh<br/>Fullness of God in helpless babe<br/>This gift of love and righteousness<br/>Scorned by the ones He came to save<br/>Till on that cross as Jesus died<br/>The wrath of God was satisfied<br/>For every sin on Him was laid<br/>Here in the death of Christ I live</p>                                  | <p>4. No guilt in life, no fear in death<br/>This is the power of Christ in me<br/>From life's first cry to final breath<br/>Jesus commands my destiny<br/>No power of hell, no scheme of man<br/>Can ever pluck me from His hand<br/>Till He returns or calls me home<br/>Here in the power of Christ I'll stand</p> |

## **Benediction**

<sup>13</sup> “Then you, my people, will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. <sup>14</sup> I will put my Spirit in you and you will live ... Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD.” (Ezekiel 39:13-14)

## **Morning Tea**

There is no physical morning tea allowed at the moment but why not give someone a call instead? Who might your ring now? Maybe the person you are hoping to keep in touch with?