

Series: The Open Door

Series Text: Revelation 3:7-8

“...These are the words of Him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut, and what He shuts no one can open. ... See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.”

Sunday, May 18: Pentecost.

Sermon: #5: Dry Bones Dancing through the Open Door

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14 (Valley of the Dry Bones) Also Acts 2:1-21 read earlier in the service.

Text: Ezekiel 37:14a “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.”

Theme: We sometimes feel lifeless, dry, and dead, like the valley of dry bones. That is true for our church and for us personally. Yet God’s power comes down and brings new life. This power is the Holy Spirit who makes us alive again, as a church and us personally. We dance again, going through the open door. Pentecost challenge: Pick a family and pray for them throughout the summer and then invite them to Rally Sunday in the fall.

Blurb: Ever feel dry and dead? Brittle and lack of life? Stuck, going nowhere? Come this Sunday to hear how God’s power comes down upon us—both individually and as a church—and makes us alive again. We have God’s Spirit, who sends us dancing through the open door!

Sermon Intro Video

PP#1: The Open Door

Dry Bones Dancing through the Open Door.

“I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.” -Ezekiel 37:14a

The Open Door. Dry Bones Dancing through the Open Door. Ezekiel 37:14a “I will put my Spirit in you and you will live.”

PP#2: *Dramatic image of swirling fire above their heads in the upper room on Pentecost.*

[*Dramatically, using big voice.*] 2000 years ago, a group of scared people huddled behind closed doors, too afraid to go out. But then, out of nowhere...the sound of a mighty, rushing wind started off in the distance, and came closer...and closer...and closer...the foundations of the house shook...and overhead a swirling, churning wind burst into flames...it separated, and seemed to come down on each of them in the form of tongues...yes, tongues of fire!...and in their bones they felt a burning...transforming the scared and timid disciples...into bold and brave people, who burst through the doors, and rushed out into the street...all telling of all the amazing things that God had done in Jesus...and all the people heard the Good News of Jesus, and the number of those saved were 3,000 that day.”

[*Excitedly*] What a fantastic story! What an amazing event! Is your heart beating a little faster? Are you excited? Don’t you wish you were there? Isn’t it incredible what happened 2,000 years ago?

PP#3: *Image of a half-filled church, boring service, nothing happening.*

[*Casually*] So, how are things in you life lately? Fine? Same as usual?

What's happening with church? Struggling along? Any mighty, rushing winds? How about 3,000 converts? How about 300? 30?....3???

[Concerned] Oh my. What's going on? Foundations here haven't been shaken in a while, huh? How about your soul? Have you had any coursing, burning Holy Spirit experiences lately? Holy fire in your bones? Or is life pretty routine, predictable, manageable?

PP#4: *Image showing a person whose life is empty, dry, unfulfilling.*

Could it be that things have gotten a bit dry around here? Where's the Holy Spirit?

Well, perhaps the Holy Spirit did all that in the story, but that was a long time ago. Things aren't like that any more.

Or, perhaps things have gotten a bit dry around here, because we've kinda been staying this side of the door...looking through from time to time...but keeping our feet safely this side of the threshold.

Do you miss how fresh God felt in your life a while back? Do you remember how exciting it felt to be so close to Him? Wasn't life an adventure *then*?

Things seem to have gotten a bit dry, haven't they...at home, in your personal life...and even here at church. Kinda stuck in a closed room.

Is this the way you really want things to be? Don't you have a desire for the foundations to shake, just a bit? Don't you yearn for the freshness of God to blow through your hair?

PP#5: *Image of Ezekiel walking among the valley of the dry bones.*

500 years before Pentecost, the same Holy Spirit blew upon a man named Ezekiel. He was asking the same questions. He looked around and saw people hanging on, just getting by. He and his people were in a foreign land, exiles, refugees of war. His homeland lay far away, and so many of his countrymen lay dead. Times were hard. He was wondering if things could ever be changed.

But the Holy Spirit came upon him, and transported him to a valley...filled w/bones, dry bones, very dry—bleached white over the years in the hot sun.

PP#6: Ezekiel 37:1-14

[1] The hand of the Lord was upon 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. [2] 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.

Ezekiel 37 “The hand of the Lord was upon 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. 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.”

What a depressing sight. Dead. Dry. Hopeless.

But then God's voice booms out!

PP#7: Ezekiel 37:1-14

[3] He asked me, "Tell me, human, can these bones live?"
I said, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know."

Verse 3, “Tell me, human, can these bones live?”

Stop right there. Did you hear that? That's *the* question, isn't it, that we need to ask?

PP#8: The Open Door. Dry Bones Dancing through the Open Door.

1. Our question: “Can these bones live?”

Can these dry, bleached, brittle, still-lying bones of our lives live again?

And Ezekiel answers in human honesty. He doesn’t say yes or no. His heart yearns for new life. But he is stuck in the middle of dry bones. And there is nothing he can do about it.

Church, I ask you: Can these *our* dry bones, live?

Ezekiel gathers his faith and barely whispers, “Lord, only *you* know.”

And then, surprisingly, God commands Ezekiel to speak to the bones, to command them to listen to the Word of the Lord.

PP#9: Ezekiel 37:1-14

[4] Then the Lord said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! [5] This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. [6] 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.' "

Verse 4, “Then the Lord said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones and say to them, ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. 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.’”

Look closely at what the command is, ““I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life....I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.””

The Hebrew word here for “breath,” *ru-ah*, is the same word for “wind” and “spirit.” It’s the same *ru-ah* that blew across the waters at creation. It’s the same *ru-ah* that God blew into Adam’s nostrils to give him life. On Pentecost, the room was filled with God’s *ru-ah*, the blowing, breath of God. And here in the valley the Lord’s command is that He will breath His blowing Spirit into the dry bones, and they will live!

PP#10: Ezekiel 37:1-14

[7] 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. [8] I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.

Ezekiel doesn’t know what to expect. He simply obeys and repeats the command. Verse 7, “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. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.”

At first *he hears* a noise, a dry, rattling noise. On Pentecost, the disciples *first hear* a noise, the sound of a rushing, mighty wind. Then they see tongs of fire rest on each one. Back with Ezekiel, he then sees the bones came together! They formed skeletons! And then the muscles appeared, and tendons, and skin completely covered them. But still they laid there...still and lifeless.

PP#11: Ezekiel 37:1-14

[9] Then the Lord said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, human, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' " [10] So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army.

Verse 9, "Then the Lord said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, human, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live.' " So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath entered them; they came to life and stood up on their feet—a vast army."

God commands Ezekiel to prophesy to the breath, the *ru-ah*. He commands, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live." And again as he is speaking, the breath blows, "like a mighty, rushing wind." And the bodies begin to quiver and twitch, they come to life, and stand to their feet! A vast army, the disciples, going out with God's new life!

PP#12: Ezekiel 37:1-14

[11] Then the Lord said to me: "Human, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.' [12] Therefore prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: O 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. [13] Then you, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them. [14] 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.' "

God then interprets the vision. Verse 11, "Then the Lord said to me: 'Human, these bones are the whole house 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: O 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. 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.' "

And God did. God restored the people back to Israel. He worked under King Cyrus and Darius of Persia to get release for the Hebrews to go back to their home country. His promise is fulfilled.

That promise also blew through the apostles on Pentecost. He put His Spirit in them, made them alive in a new way. God took the old bones of Judaism, and gave flesh and skin in Christianity, and blew the breath of His Spirit, creating new life.

This new life caused God's people to dance! Down through the ages. And to us, too!

PP#13: The Open Door. Dry Bones Dancing through the Open Door.

1. Our question: "Can these bones live?"
 2. God's answer *blows* through our hair!
- Ru-ah* [Hebrew] = *charis* [Greek] = breath/wind

This promise blows now through our hair!

Does your heart ache, "My bones are dried up and my hope is gone. I am cut off?" Hear God's promise to you: "I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live, and I will settle you in your

own land!" God has a Plan for you, a Promise for you, and a Provision for you. God has Breath for you, His Wind for you, His Spirit for you, His *ru-ah* for you.

You know, sometimes we label certain churches, certain Christians, *Charismatic*. But you know what? All Christians are! You and I, this church, is Charismatic! *Charis* is the Greek word for *ru-ah*. It means that I fully believe that the Spirit of God is still blowing around today, doing the same things it did back in the Bible.

I believe that! I know it's true! I'm a Charismatic. And I hope you are, too! Because as a Charismatic, I believe that God brings the Breath of life to dried bones—my dried bones, your dried bones—and make them walk again, bold again, dance again!

Come, Holy Spirit, come! Blow. Burn. Dance. In us! Fill this room here again today! Breath on your people. Blow on this church. Bring new life to us all! Come as a rushing, mighty Wind! Shake our foundations, fill us, and send your Fire upon each one of us! Make us alive again!

PP#14: *Image of a person with wind blowing/pushing from behind, towards an open door.*

You see, I'm not content with dry bones. I want something more for my life, for our church. Maybe we're not dead, but we're dry. We need to hear how our lives can be different! God has opened doors in front of us, and blows us forward.

I want us, as a church, to get excited about reaching out and touching those hurting and groping and struggling around us. I want the love of Christ to shine out from us to those who feel lost and left out.

We need Pentecost, don't we? We need to see the open door! God has *a plan, a promise and a provision* for us. Not just to stay here, the way things are. His *plan* is for us to be His witness fully into our community. His *promise* is that He "will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. [He] will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin. [He] will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord."

His *provision* is the sending of the mighty, rushing Wind, the Breath of life, His *ru-ah*, from the day of Pentecost, to us, right here, right now. So on this Pentecost, I urge you as a church to 1) catch God's plan, 2) to claim His promise, 3) and rely on the provision of His Spirit blowing among us. We are a charismatic church!

PP#15: The Open Door. Dry Bones Dancing through the Open Door.

1. Our question: "Can these bones live?"
2. God's answer *blows* through our hair!
3. Pentecost is a miracle of other people hearing

You know, if you stop and think about it, the miracle of Pentecost, the giving of the Holy Spirit to God's people, is not just a miracle for those who receive the Holy Spirit. Actually, it is a miracle for those who happened to be passing along the street outside the room, to hear the joy of God's love, in a way that they could understand.

The miracle wasn't that the Christians could *speak* in different languages. The miracle was that *other people* could *understand* them. Pentecost offers us an image of what it is like after we go through the open door. God breaths life back into us, restores us to full living, *dancing*. And God's wind blows us through the open door He has placed in front of us. And we see that on the other side of the door, other people are blessed as they hear the blessing and joy of what God is doing for them. We dance through the open door *with* God's Spirit, and *for* God's mission of others being blessed

Today we experience the miracle of Pentecost again, in our own lives, in our communities. You and I have the Holy Spirit blowing through our hair, using us to share God's joy. By the power of the Holy Spirit, others will come to know and understand what God has done for them. Pentecost is going out through the door and sharing with others the good news of Jesus. The disciples on Pentecost experienced the life God renewed in them. They opened the doors and went out into the streets. There, others heard from them how amazing God is. Others caught the fire!

PP#16: Our Pentecost Challenge:

- May: Pray daily for the Holy Spirit to bring 1-2 unchurched people to mind
- June: Pray daily for these 1-2 specifically and by name
- July: Once or twice, talk with them (phone, over the fence, BBQ, coffee, etc.)
- Aug.: Invite them to the Wed. evening BBQ
- Sept.: Invite them to Rally Sunday service (Aug. 11)

So, here's our Pentecost challenge: As charismatic people, we go "making disciples for Jesus Christ." Here's how we can do this together:

1) For the rest of May, each of us is to pray *every day* asking the Holy Spirit to identify to us, one or two unchurched people in our normal sphere of influence, whom we are to pray for. We are asking the Holy Spirit, you see, to bring these people to our minds. The Holy Spirit is to do the work. We are to pray that we will notice which unchurched people are to be on our hearts.

2) Then, in June, we are to take the one or two people that the Holy Spirit has brought to our attention, and pray for them by name each day, for all of June. Pray for them to desire to know Christ more fully. Pray for them to become involved in our own local church. After all, why not? I think ours is one of the best there is! And pray for specific connection points for you to offer influence on these people in the course of normal, routine daily life.

3) Then, in July, try to connect with them. Perhaps you spend some time talking with them over the backyard fence. Perhaps you spend your afternoon break with them. Perhaps you call them on the phone. Perhaps you invite them out for coffee. Perhaps you invite them to your grilling out in your backyard. Perhaps you can invite them to the Blue Grass Festival the last Saturday in July.

4) Then, in August, invite them to one of our church's Wed. evening BBQs, and offer to go with them, that you'll pick them up, and even offer to give them a ride.

5) And then, in September, invite them to come to worship with you here at Forest Hills, perhaps on Rally Sunday, Sept. 11. It will be awesome!

PP#17: *Image of a person with wind blowing/pushing from behind, towards an open door.*

Pentecost requires boldness. The disciples were pushed out of their closed room. We are pushed through an open door. We are called to go share with others, helping them to know the joy we have in Jesus. You see, each of us has a unique sphere of influence that no one else has. It's been given to us by God. And God wants to use that in us to touch those people, as no one else can. It's true. Don't believe me, believe the Holy Spirit.

It's time for bold action! Tell me, church, will you do this? Will you let the Holy Spirit activate you? This Church?

Our Pentecost goal is that come September, we will have new people added to our number. Perhaps not 3,000, but how about 3? How about 13? How about 30 new faces here in this church, getting involved in the life of this congregation? I believe we can do this. I feel called by God to lay out this challenge. I know it will happen!

Our dry bones are going to gain new flesh and blood. It's possible because the Lord will breath on us. He blows His Spirit among us. And He will add to our number those being saved. And He will do it through His Holy Spirit in you. He will bring to your mind 1-2 people He will make cross your path in a way for you to share about what God means to you.

PP#18-19:

Leader: "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!"

People: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life."

Leader: "I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin."

People: "I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord."

Leader: "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."

People: "I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them."

Leader: "Then the Lord said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it,'

People: "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, that they may live."

Leader: "So I prophesied as the Lord commanded me, and breath entered them;

People: "They came to life and stood up on their feet--a vast army."

Leader: May God honor our reliance on His Plan, Promise and Provision! Amen!

As we agree together as a church, I want us to follow God's instruction and prophesy to the dry bones of our church. Please stand with me and join me responsively in the prophesy from Ezekiel...

Closing Song

Pentecost Candles

Benediction

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR MAY 15, 2016

Spring Series: “The Open Door”

Sermon: “Dancing through the Open Door”

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14 (The Valley of the Dry Bones)

Opening prayer

Introductions: Share about a time when you experienced an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, either in your life directly, or in worship, or in the gifts of the Spirit.

Background: Skim Ezekiel 36. What is going on?

Read: Ezekiel 37:1-14

1. Verse 1. How do you explain what happened to Ezekiel? What did he experience?

2. Verse 2. How do you picture this scene? Describe it with different senses.

3. How might this image represent an experience of your own life?

4. Verse 3. What is the human answer to this question? Why may God be asking it?

5. Why did Ezekiel answer the way he did, do you think?

6. Verses 4-8. Ezekiel makes a prophecy over the dry bones, while they are still bones. What is the stated purpose of why God is giving the bones new life?

7. Verses 9-10. The recreated bodies still didn't have life. How does the life come into them?

8. Compare this story with Genesis . What correlations can you make about this wind and breath?

9. Verses 11-14. God now interprets the vision. Explain, in your own words, the meaning of the vision.

10. What correlations can you make from the meaning of this vision to your own life's situation?

11. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?