

## “From Exile, Return. From Death, New Life.”

A sermon by Pastor Steve Easterday-McPadden  
for First UMC, Grand Junction, Sunday, Nov. 1, 2020

This sermon can be listened to on the FUMCGJ  
website: [www.fumcgj.org/sermons-2/](http://www.fumcgj.org/sermons-2/)

*Scripture Text:* Ezekiel 37:1-14 [NLT]

### OPENING

The world of Ezekiel (עֶזְקֵאל):

- A prophet, whose name means, “God strengthens”
- A prophet to the people of Judah, just prior to and in the midst of their experience of Babylonian exile
- His vision of the destruction of Jerusalem (and subsequent return of the people to the land of Israel) occurred about 5 years into the reign of the last king of Judah, Jehoiachin (who surrendered to Babylon and was carried into exile about 597 BC). So, Ezekiel’s vision occurred about 592 BC., ~5 years before the final sacking of Jerusalem about which Ezekiel prophesied.

### TO THE SCRIPTURES

An expository treatment of Ezekiel 37:1-14

The Lord took hold of me, and I was carried away by the Spirit of the Lord to a valley filled with bones. <sup>2</sup> He led me all around among the bones that covered the valley floor. They were scattered everywhere across the ground and

were completely dried out. <sup>3</sup> Then he asked me, “Son of man, can these bones become living people again?”

(\*I find humor here...\*) “O Sovereign Lord,” I replied, “you alone know the answer to that.”

<sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, “**Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say,** ‘Dry bones, listen to the word of the Lord! <sup>5</sup> This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again! <sup>6</sup> I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord.’”

<sup>7</sup> So I spoke this message, just as he told me. Suddenly as I spoke, there was a rattling noise all across the valley. The bones of each body came together and attached themselves as complete skeletons. <sup>8</sup> Then **as I watched, muscles and flesh formed over the bones. Then skin formed to cover their bodies, but they still had no breath in them.**

<sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, “**Speak a prophetic message to the winds,** son of man. Speak a prophetic message and say, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come, O breath, from the four winds! Breathe into these dead bodies so they may live again.’”

<sup>10</sup> So I spoke the message as he commanded me, and breath came into their bodies. (\*Ruach: Wind, breath, spirit\*) They all came to life and stood up on their feet—a great army.

<sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, “**Son of man, these bones represent the people of Israel. They are saying,** ‘We have become old, dry bones—all hope is gone. Our nation is finished.’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore, prophesy to them and say, ‘**This is what the Sovereign Lord says:** O my people, I will open your graves of exile and cause you to rise again. Then I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> When this happens, O my people, you will know that I am the Lord. <sup>14</sup> **I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live again and return home to your own land.** Then you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done what I said. Yes, the Lord has spoken!’” – Ezekiel 37:1-14 [NLT]

### SERMON THOUGHTS

- ❖ From exile...return. Our circumstances never have the last word. Bottom line? Hope/trust/faith in God is never in vain.
- ❖ By extension – from death...new life. What we see in death is NOT the last word! Bottom line? Hope/trust/faith in God is never in vain.
- ❖ This passage is filled with hope for All Saints Day – It is NOT what we say about life and death that matters; it is what God says that matters!

### CONCLUSION

Transition to the sacrament of Holy Communion