

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, March 22nd, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Old Bones, New Life: The Power of God's Spirit
Fifth Sunday of Lent
Ezekiel 37:1-14

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Come, people of God, and lift your hearts to the Lord.

We come seeking the One who gives life and hope.

Come from the weariness of the week and the burdens you carry.

We come trusting in the mercy and faithfulness of our God.

The Lord calls His people to gather in His presence.

We come to worship with reverence, gratitude, and joy.

Let us worship God.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Almighty and everlasting God,
we come before You with humble hearts and thankful voices.
You are the Maker of heaven and earth,
the giver of life and the sustainer of all that exists.
Your wisdom is beyond searching,
Your mercy beyond measure,
Your faithfulness extending from generation to generation.
You are holy, righteous, and just in all Your ways.
Yet You are also gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
You call us to Yourself,
not because we are worthy,
but because You are rich in mercy.

We praise You for Your goodness that surrounds us each day,
for Your patience with our weakness,
and for Your kindness that leads us again and again to seek Your face.
Now we ask, O Lord, that You would draw near to us as we worship.
Quiet our wandering thoughts.
Lift our hearts above the distractions of this world.
Fill this place with the peace of Your presence.
Open our minds to receive Your truth,
and open our hearts to respond with faith and obedience.
May all that we do in this hour
be pleasing in Your sight
and bring glory to Your holy name.
Through Christ our Lord we pray.
Amen.

Call to Confession

God calls His people not only to worship,
but also to honesty before Him.
We come before a holy and righteous God
who knows our hearts completely.
Nothing is hidden from His sight.
Yet we confess not in fear,
but in hope—
for the One who calls us to repentance
is also rich in mercy and ready to forgive.
Let us now humble ourselves before the Lord
and confess our sins together.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,
We confess that we have not loved You with our whole heart.
We have wandered from Your ways and followed our own desires.
We have trusted in our own strength rather than depending on You.
Too often our words have been careless,
our thoughts self-centered,
and our actions lacking in kindness and compassion.
We confess that we have neglected what is good
and done what we ought not to have done.
We have failed to seek Your will
and have lived as though we belonged to ourselves.

Forgive us, O Lord, for the sake of Your great mercy.
 Cleanse us from our sin
 and renew a right spirit within us.
 Give us humble hearts that desire what is good,
 willing hands that serve others in love,
 and faithful lives that honor You in all we do.
 Restore us by Your grace,
 and lead us in paths that bring glory to Your name.
Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear this good news:
 Our God is gracious and compassionate,
 abounding in steadfast love and mercy.
 To all who turn to Him with sincere hearts,
 He is faithful to forgive and restore.
 By His grace our sins are pardoned,
 our guilt is removed,
 and we are welcomed again as His people.
 Thanks be to God for His mercy and forgiveness.

Thanks be to God.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.

Hymn: "10,000 Reasons"

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul
 Worship His holy name
 Sing like never before, O my soul
 I'll worship Your holy name

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning
 It's time to sing Your song again

Whatever may pass, and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes. (Chorus)

You're rich in love, and You're slow to anger
Your name is great, and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find. (Chorus)

And on that day, when my strength is failing
The end draws near, and my time has come
Still, my soul will sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years and then forevermore (Chorus)

Responsive Reading

Psalm 103:1-13

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!

² **Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,**

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ **who redeems your life from the pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,**

⁵ who satisfies you with good
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶ **The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all who are oppressed.**

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.

⁸ **The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

⁹ He will not always chide,
nor will he keep his anger forever.

¹⁰ **He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.**

¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

¹³ As a father shows compassion to his children,
so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

Anthem (Music Ministry): "Abide With Me"

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Ezekiel 37:1-14

37 The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ² And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. ³ And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord God, you know." ⁴ Then he said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵ Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶ And I will lay sinews upon 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."

⁷ So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸ And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. ⁹ Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live." ¹⁰ So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

¹¹ Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.'

¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord."

Sermon

Ezekiel's vision begins by forcing us to face the reality of death in a valley. Not a place of gentle quiet or peace, but a place where life has long since disappeared. The prophet Ezekiel tells us:

Ezekiel 37:1-2

37 The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. ²And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry.

When Ezekiel looks around, he sees bones everywhere. They are not hidden beneath the earth. Instead, they are scattered across the ground beneath the open sky—skulls staring blankly at heaven, femurs tangled with ribs, vertebrae lying like scattered pearls. The Scripture is clear about two things; there were very many, and they were very dry.

Dry bones. Bones that have been dead for so long that even the vultures have given up at finding any food in them. Bones that have been bleached white by the sun, cracked by the wind, and stripped of every trace of life. Bones that seem to whisper: 'Time has done its work. Life has vanished'. All that remains is the silent testimony of lives that once breathed, laughed, and loved and now do not.

And yet, the Lord does something striking. He does not merely show Ezekiel this valley from a safe distance.

He leads him through it. Step by step, the prophet walks among the bones so he cannot miss the scale of the devastation. Step by step, Ezekiel hears the crunch of bones beneath his feet.

He sees the bones of what once were people lives—mothers who sang lullabies, warriors who shouted battle cries, children who ran through the streets of Jerusalem.

Sometimes that is exactly how God works with us. He does not rush past the valley. He does not skip over the brokenness in our lives. He brings us face to face with what is dead, what is hopeless, what feels beyond repair. He makes us linger there until we can smell the dust and feel the weight of our own helplessness.

Lent is supposed to do the same thing for us. Lent calls for us to slow us down long enough to recognize the truth.

Resurrection never begins with pretending things are alive. Resurrection never begins with shallow optimism or forced positivity.

Resurrection begins with honesty. It begins in the valley. It begins with the raw, trembling prayer: “Lord, this is dead. But you are alive.”

Before God raises the bones, He first names the death.

Lent invites us to stop pretending. It calls us not only to repent of our sins but also of our self-sufficiency—our belief that we can somehow bring life into places where only God can.

This valley in which Ezekiel stands is not simply about personal struggle. Ezekiel speaks to a people whose entire world has collapsed.

Jerusalem has fallen. The temple—the very house of God—has been reduced to rubble. God’s people are exiled in Babylon, stripped of identity, stripped of land, stripped of hope. The promises of God feel distant, uncertain, unreachable. The songs of Zion have turned to ash in their mouths. Standing in that valley of national catastrophe, God asks a question that hangs in the air like thunder: **‘Son of man, can these bones live?’**

Ezekiel 37:3

³ And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, you know.”

Ezekiel’s answer is one of the most honest and faith-filled sentences in all of Scripture: **‘O Lord GOD, you know.’**

And this is the heart of the vision: when God speaks His Word and breathes His Spirit, even the most hopeless death can become life.

Human wisdom says, “No way. Bones cannot live again. Science says impossible. History says impossible. Experience says impossible.”

But faith answers differently. Faith does not deny that death is in the valley. Faith does not cover up the brokenness with religious clichés. Faith does not whisper empty words of optimism. Faith says: ‘Lord, you are bigger than what I see. You are stronger than what I fear. You are more alive than what is dead. I don’t know how, but I know who. O Lord, you know.’

Anyone who has walked through a forest in late winter understands this moment. The branches are bare and black against a gray sky. The ground is frozen hard as iron. Everything seems lifeless. If you judge only by what you see, life has vanished forever. Yet beneath the soil we know there is life waits quietly for spring. Roots are still alive even when the surface looks dead. Sap still flows deep where no eye can see.

So it is in the valley of dry bones. God sees what we cannot see. The valley may look like the end of the story, but God is never limited by what we see. His vision is not bound by what we see. His power is not limited by what we think possible.

Then we see the power of God's Word.

The Lord gives Ezekiel a command that must have sounded utterly absurd:

Ezekiel 37:4–6

⁴Then he said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. ⁵Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. ⁶And I will lay sinews upon 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."

Imagine the moment that followed.

Ezekiel stands alone in a valley filled with death. Bones in every direction. A prophet preaching to skeletons.

He speaks the Word of God into the silence.

And for a moment—nothing happens.

No movement.

No breath.

No sound.

Just wind across a graveyard.

And then—

Ezekiel 37:7–8

⁷So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. ⁸And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them

A sound. A rattling that echoes across the valley like the first whispers of life returning.

Bones come together—femur to hip, rib to spine, skull to neck. Tendons appear, knitting them strong. Flesh forms, warm and living. Skin covers what once were bare, grotesque frames. The

valley that once held scattered remains now holds bodies lying across the ground—whole, formed, perfect in structure.

But something is still missing. **‘There was no breath in them.’**

Form without life. Faith without the Spirit. Church without the Word. Plans without power. It looks like life, but it is still death.

What we see here is a profound truth about how God works.
The Word of God is not merely information—it is the instrument of God’s power.

When Ezekiel speaks, the bones begin to move.
The Word gathers them together.

But the bodies still lie silent on the ground, dead.
They have form, but they do not yet have life.

And that is because the Spirit must breathe.

God has chosen to work through Word and Spirit together.

The Word calls.
And the Spirit gives life.

Without the Spirit, even the most beautiful structure remains lifeless.

But the vision is not finished. Now, we will see the life-giving power of God’s Spirit.

Ezekiel 37:9–10

⁹Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” ¹⁰So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

Ruach. The word means breath, spirit, wind.

The same Hebrew word used here is used when God breathed life into Adam in the garden.

The same word that hovered over the waters at creation.

The same word that will fall like fire at Pentecost.

God is restoring life. God is breathing His own Spirit into what was once dead.

Bones rise. Bodies stand upright. What once looked like a graveyard now looks like an exceedingly great army—organized, strong, ready for battle.

Where God breathes, the dead rise. Where God speaks, the impossible becomes reality. The Word gathers. The Spirit gives life.

Obedience plus God's Spirit equals resurrection.

Faith is not manufactured by human effort; it is created by divine power.

Salvation is not earned by striving; it is given by grace.

Human hands may plant the seed, human hearts may be filled with hope, human minds might pray—but only God gives the increase.

Then the Lord explains the vision so we will never miss the point:

Ezekiel 37:11–14

¹¹ Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.'

¹² Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. ¹³ And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. ¹⁴ And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord."

God specializes in bringing life out of places that appear beyond all hope.

A farmer understands this better than most. In early spring the field looks dead—empty, cold, nothing but mud and stubble. Nothing is happening on the surface. Yet the farmer plants anyway, trusting what cannot yet be seen. Months later the same field bursts with life. What looked barren becomes abundant. What looked hopeless becomes harvest.

God's Spirit is the farmer of dead valleys; He plants, He waters, and He resurrects.

For the church today, this vision points far beyond ancient Israel. This vision ultimately prepares us for the greatest resurrection God would ever perform. It points straight to Jesus Christ.

There was another valley, another seeming end. Outside Jerusalem, on a hill called Calvary, the Son of God was crucified. His body was taken down, wrapped in linen, and laid in a cold stone tomb. From every human perspective, the story ended in darkness. Despair seemed final. The disciples scattered like frightened sheep. The women wept. The angels must have held their breath.

But the God who asked Ezekiel, “Can these bones live?” had not finished speaking. On the third day, the stone was rolled away. Christ was raised from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is the final, glorious answer to the valley of dry bones. Death does not have the final word. Sin does not have the final word. Despair does not have the final word. God does.

Where death says “finished,” God whispers, “beginning.”
Where despair says “done,” God breathes, “alive.”

Because Christ lives, the promise of new life extends to every one of us.

The same Word that called bones together still speaks with authority today. The same Spirit who breathed life into that ancient valley still moves among God’s people in every nation, every language, every century.

Where we see endings, God sees beginnings.
Where we see dryness, God prepares resurrection.

In our personal valleys—grief that feels like it will never lift, guilt that whispers we are beyond forgiveness, loss that leaves an empty chair at the table, despair that makes even getting out of bed feel impossible—the promise of Ezekiel 37 is not distant allegory.

It is living, breathing truth for right now. God can take what seems entirely beyond repair and make it whole. He can take fractured relationships, broken dreams, exhausted faith, wayward children, failing health, and breathe new life into them.

Nothing is too dry. Nothing is too far gone. No marriage is too broken. No addiction is too strong. No church is too dead. No heart is too cold.

God specializes in impossible comebacks. Dry bones are where God does His best work.

The valley is not the end of the story. God is still speaking. God is still breathing life into His people.

Wherever the Word is faithfully proclaimed and the Holy Spirit moves in power, even the driest bones may yet live. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives inside every believer. The same power that turned a graveyard into an army is here with us today.

So let us go forth this day not despairing over what is dead, but trusting in the God who speaks life into dead things.

Let us hear His Word with fresh ears.

Let us pray for His Spirit with fresh hunger.

Let us stand among the dry bones of our own lives, our families, our churches, and our nation, and proclaim with trembling confidence:

‘O Lord GOD, you know.’

Let us pray,

Puritan Prayer for Spiritual Life

O God of the highest heaven,
occupy the throne of our hearts,
take full possession and reign supreme over us.

Lay low every rebellious desire;
let no vile passion resist Your holy will.

Manifest Your mighty power in us
and make us new creatures in Christ.

Give us repentance that leads to life,
faith that clings to Your mercy,
and hearts that delight to do Your will.

Break the power of sin within us,
renew our minds by Your truth,
and fill us with the grace of Your Holy Spirit.

Let the Word we have heard today
take root deeply in our hearts
and bring forth the fruit of a faithful and obedient life.

Keep us watchful against temptation,
humble in spirit,
and steadfast in hope.

And when our earthly pilgrimage is ended,
bring us safely into the fullness of life
in Your eternal kingdom.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Invitation to Offering

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn #300: "Father We Love You"

Father we love You, we worship and adore You,
Glorify your name in all the earth,
Glorify your name, Glorify your name,
Glorify your name in all the earth.

Jesus we love You, we worship and adore You,
Glorify your name in all the earth,
Glorify your name, Glorify your name,
Glorify your name in all the earth.

Spirit we love You, we worship and adore You,
Glorify your name in all the earth,
Glorify your name, Glorify your name,
Glorify your name in all the earth.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious and loving Father,

We thank You for the privilege of gathering together in Your presence.
You have sustained us through another day
and have drawn us together as Your people.
We give You thanks for the gifts of faith, hope, and fellowship.
You have placed us in a community where we may encourage one another,
bear one another's burdens,
and grow together in love.
We pray for those among us who are weary or discouraged.
Strengthen them with Your comfort.
For those who are struggling with illness or sorrow,
grant them Your peace and healing.
For those facing uncertainty or difficult decisions,
guide them with Your wisdom.
Bless the families of this congregation.
Strengthen marriages,
encourage parents,
and guide our children in paths of truth and kindness.
We pray also for our wider community and our nation.
Grant wisdom to those in positions of leadership,
peace among neighbors,
and justice tempered with mercy.
As we soon gather in fellowship,
we thank You for the food that has been prepared
and for the hands that have served to make it ready.
Bless this meal to our nourishment
and bless our time together in conversation and friendship.
May our fellowship reflect the kindness and generosity You have shown to us.
Let our words be gracious,
our laughter joyful,
and our time together strengthening to one another.
In all things, may our lives bring honor to You.
We offer this prayer with gratitude and trust,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Benediction

Now may the Lord bless you and keep you.
May His grace guide your steps and His peace guard your hearts.
May you walk in faith, serve in love, and rest in the assurance of His mercy.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Amen.