

"Can these bones live?"

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning to you, wherever you're watching from. Thank you for joining us for this service from Stornoway Free Church. It's really encouraging for us to see so many joining online to the live stream and also to the service later on, God willing, this evening.
- So wherever you are, I pray that God will bless this time of worship to you, especially that his word will be blessed to you, in your own soul, in your family, in the context in which you live.
- We're going to begin with praise and we're going to sing, first of all, from Psalm 108. Psalm 108 and we're singing from the Scottish Psalter. And it's on page 146 if you're using the Blue Psalm books.
- Verses 1 to 5. O Lord God, my heart is steadfast and with all my soul I'll sing. Harp and lyre I will awaken and my song the dawn will bring.
- And we'll sing verses 1 to 5 in Psalm 108. And the tune we're singing to is Stuttgart. O Lord God, my heart is steadfast and with all my soul I'll sing.
- [1 : 1 5] Harp and lyre I will awaken and my song the dawn will bring.
- Lord my God, among the nations, I will ever give you praise.
- In the midst of all the peoples I will sing of you always.
- For your steadfast love is boundless, greater than the heavens high.
- And your faithfulness toward us reaches even to the sky.
- [2 : 1 1] Far above the highest heavens be exalted, O my God.
- And through all the earth around us. Let your glory spread abroad.
- I'm going to read now from God's Word. And reading is from the prophecy of Ezekiel.
- And chapter 37. We'll read from the beginning. Then as far as verse 14. The book of the prophet Ezekiel. Chapter 37.
- Verses 1 to 14. 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.
- [3 : 0 8] It was full of bones. 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. And he said to me, Son of man, can these bones live?
- And I answered, O Lord God, you know. Then he said to me, Prophecy over these bones. And say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.
- Thus says the Lord God to these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter you. And you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you. And 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. 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. And I looked. And behold, there were sinews on them. And flesh had come upon them. And skin had covered them.

[4 : 12] But there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, Prophecy to the breath. Prophecy, son of man. And say to the breath. Thus says the Lord God.

Come from the four winds, O breath. And breathe on me, slain, That they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me. And the breath came into them.

And they lived and stood on her feet. An exceedingly great army. 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 clean cut off. Therefore prophecy 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. And you shall know that I am the Lord When I open your graves, And raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my spirit within you.

[5 : 12] 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.

Amen. May God add his blessing again To a reading of his word. Let's now call upon him and pray. Let's join together in prayer. Our gracious and eternal God, As we come to read your word this morning, We give thanks for the certainty that it brings to us, Of your own ability, Of your power, Of your creative might.

And the certainty also of your faithfulness to your promises, As you showed to Israel and to Judah, So long ago. We thank you that that has been repeated in the history of your people, Even up to the present day in which we live.

We thank you today that we can come to claim these promises for ourselves, That we can come by trusting in you, To receive the fulfilment of these promises, In our personal experiences.

We thank you today for this privilege once again we have, Of being together in worship, Of our minds being given to the things of your salvation, Of your own word, Of your glory through it.

[6 : 34] We pray that we may know that you are the Lord, We may know that you are our God, And help us, Lord, to claim you, Through faith in Jesus Christ, your Son, To be our God and our Father in heaven today.

We thank you for the promises, That you have given to your church, The promises that you will bring your purposes to pass, Through to the end of the world.

We give thanks, Lord, for the encouragement, That this passage we have read gives to us. We sometimes feel that we ourselves are lacking in strength, In spiritual vitality.

And when we see the world around us, Oh Lord, So much of the time, And so many of its inhabitants living without you, Or serving other false gods. Gracious Lord, We thank you for your reviving power, For your ability to reconstruct, And to bring to life that which is dead, For the way that you assure us, Even through the epistles of the New Testament too, That even though we be dead in trespasses and sins, You are the God who is able to bring us to life, To set us on our feet spiritually, To bring us into that living relationship with yourself, Through which we come to know eternal life.

Oh Lord, We thank you today for the gospel, That brings us such a great message, And for the way that you bring to us in your word, That emphasis upon life, As delighting the Lord our God, Because you have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, But that we should turn from our wicked way and live, And so be delightful to you.

[8 : 17] Bless us then Lord, We pray today, We pray for ourselves as a congregation, Gathered together in this way, And we pray that you bless your word to us, Show to us, We pray something in you of your glory, Assure us, We pray of your own interest in us, And of your concern for us, That we would advance in spiritual life, And in knowledge of you, We ask Lord for all who join us today, From different parts of our land, And even parts of the world far from us, We ask your blessing for them, And give thanks, For their interest in the gospel, And in sharing together with us, In the worship of God, Lord bless us we pray as a congregation, During these critical times, Help us as we wait for developments, From day to day, And from week to week, Help us to look to yourself, Oh Lord, Help us to have our trust in, Your strength and in your ability, To deal with a situation in the world, In which we are caught up,

We pray especially, Oh Lord, For the many people in the world, Who today have, Trauma and sadness, And sorrow, Due to the COVID virus, And its devastating effects, We know too Lord, That there are many others today, Who mourn the passing of loved ones, Who have been taken from this world, Not by the virus, But through other means, And we pray for those today, Who are suffering with various illnesses, That we know ourselves, And we ask, Oh Lord, That you'd be pleased to bless them, And their families, In their own lives especially, And give them to know of your presence with them, As they walk through these valleys of shadows, We pray that the light of the gospel, The light of the world, Who is Jesus himself, Will be made known to them, Will be made precious to them, We ask you blessing for, Our government, Again at this time, As we pray for them, And we pray Lord, That you would direct them, That you would give to them,

To decide upon matters, As they affect us all, In a way that would be best for us, For our progress, As a people, We pray Lord, That you would not turn from us, Despite the fact that we see, So much evidence Lord, Around us, And even within ourselves, If we are honest, That we are not progressing, As we should in our thoughts, In our deliberations, In regard to this pandemic, Oh Lord God, We pray that you would make us wise, Unto salvation, That we may realise, That you are speaking to us, Through this, As through every other providence, Small or great, We pray that you would teach us, Your ways, And draw us into your paths, Help us to turn from evil, From the ways of sin, From the ways of rebellion, Against you, From ways that would turn, To idols, To false gods, To those things, That we are so naturally prone, To follow, Lord, Even to ourselves,

And our self-sufficiency, Deliver us, We pray, From all that would distract us, And keep us away, From having our trust, And our confidence in you, Bless today we pray, Our children, Bless those of them today, Who join together with us, In this service, And those who are unable, To do so, We pray for them too, We pray for them, In regard to our congregation, And other congregations too, We pray for them, Lord, As they go to school, And as they are taught in school, We pray, For the teachers at this time, With all their added burdens, We ask that you would be gracious to them, That you would help them, Oh Lord, At this time, With so many additional tasks, And so much on their minds, To do with, With safety, And with regulations, Above the normal, Be pleased, We pray, To encourage them, We ask that you would, Make them a blessing, To the children, So that their education, May progress, We pray for those, Who are anticipating, Beginning further education, We ask that you'd bless them,

Especially those, Who need to leave home, And we ask Lord, That you would, Bless them as they anticipate, Going to our cities, Or other places, To study there, We pray that you'd, Keep them safe, And we pray that they may progress, Also in their learning, And grant to them Lord, That you would be, Their God, And their guide, Through all of these things, Remember us then Lord, We pray now, As we continue, To look to you here, As we wait upon you, For this short time of worship, Receive our thanks we pray, And as we confess our sins, We pray that you would cleanse us, We pray that you would, Forgive our sins, That you would be pleased, O Lord, To establish us, In the ways of righteousness, Hear us we pray, For Jesus' sake, Amen.

[13 : 14] Now children, We're looking today, At another of the Bible animals, And today we're looking at, The donkey, Sometimes known as the ass, But usually in these translations, We have nowadays called, The donkey, And in chapter 21, Of Matthew, We find that, The donkey is something, That Jesus used, When he actually came to Jerusalem, To arrive at Jerusalem, On the way to, His death on the cross, Chapter 21 of Matthew, Matthew tells us, That he said to, The two disciples, To two of his disciples, Go to the village, In front of you, And immediately you'll find, A donkey tied, And a colt, That's a young donkey, With her, Untie them, And bring them to me, If anyone says to you, You shall say, The Lord needs them, And he will send them at once, This took place, To fulfill, What was spoken by the prophet, Saying, Say to the daughter of Zion, Behold, Your king is coming to you, Humble, And mounted on a donkey, And on a colt, The foal of a beast of burden,

The disciples went and did, As Jesus had directed them, They brought the donkey, And the colt, And put on them their cloaks, And he sat on them, Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, Others cut branches from the trees, And spread them on the road, And the crowds that went before him, And that followed him, Were shouting, Hosanna to the king, To the son of David, Blessed is he who comes, In the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest, When he entered Jerusalem, The whole city was stirred up, Saying, Who is this?

And the crowd said, This is the prophet Jesus, From Nazareth of Galilee. This is a very important point, In the life of Jesus, When he came here to Jerusalem, And when he fulfilled, The prophecy of the Old Testament, That mentioned him coming like this, On a donkey into the city, Prophecy from Zechariah, From the prophet Zechariah, And for one thing, It tells us, Children, That the things that were promised, Many hundreds of years, Before Jesus was in the world, Actually came to be fulfilled, Just as God had said, And that itself tells us, That you can trust, The word of God, That you can trust, What God has given us, In the Bible, Even if there are things, That yet remain to be fulfilled, That haven't yet happened, That are promised to happen, Because God has already fulfilled, His word so often,

You can see that, It doesn't matter, Even if there are hundreds of years, Between what God promises, And it coming to pass, It is true, And it is reliable, And you can trust in it, And I want you to remember that, Because, There are so many, Ways in which, The world around us, Calls into question, The truth of God's word, And will suggest to you, That it's really, Just a bit old fashioned, And no longer relevant, To trust in something like, The Bible, To be true, And to be accurate, Here's one of the passages, That tells us, How could it possibly be, That such a thing happened, As a fulfilment of an old prophecy, If it were not the word of God, And that's so often the case, In the Bible, And the donkey was, Very important, In the Old Testament, And in the time of Jesus as well, It was a very valuable animal, Because, It was an animal that was used, Very much for carrying, Loads of stuff, And people of course themselves,

Like Jesus here, Would sometimes ride, On a donkey, It was a very common animal, Used for different purposes, Because of that, It was a very valuable animal, And it wasn't just, Ordinary people, Like you and I, Sometimes, Very important people, Would use donkeys, Instead of a horse, And, The donkey was very good, For travelling on very rough roads, If you're taking a mountain path, In those days, The donkey, Donkey was very sure-footed, And it wouldn't, Actually slip, And fall down, So they could rely, On the donkey, And when Jesus entered, Here on the donkey, A number of things, Are actually meant by that, First of all, There's, The humility, Of Jesus himself, Although Jesus, Is a king, And was a king, Then as well, He was the king, As was shown by the sign, That was put on the cross, He didn't come, With all the ceremony,

[17 : 53] He didn't come, With all the pomp, With all the grand things, That kings, Usually have, He came, As a very humble person, He came as a servant, The servant of God, The father, And that tells us, About Jesus, That in order to be our saviour, And to provide, Salvation for us, He became humbled, He humbled himself, To death, He didn't actually say, About himself, Well I'm the king, I'm the creator of the world, I'm not going to sit, On a donkey, I'm not going to come, Into the world as a servant, I expect people to serve me, That's not what you find, He actually came, In the humblest of positions, And he humbled himself, And that's important for us, Because the most important, Place in the kingdom of God, Is the place of the servant, Is the place of the humble servant, And that's what Jesus, Wants us to be, Not to make a name, For ourselves, Not to think of ourselves, As really important, But to do whatever,

Jesus wants us to do for him, As his servants, And secondly, It showed that the kingdom of Jesus, This is the king coming, To the city of Jerusalem, On this donkey, And it reminds us that, The kingdom of Jesus, The kingdom of God, Is a kingdom of peace, Because riding on the donkey here, Is associated with, Not just humility, But with peace, He didn't come on a war horse, He didn't come with a suit of armour, He didn't come dressed as, A conqueror in an unusual way, He came, As one who was, Showing that his kingdom, Was one of peace, And that too is important, For us, Because we are required to, Be peaceful people, We are required to be, People like Jesus, Who emphasise, Peace, We don't actually, Get involved with, Stuff that causes problems, For other people, We don't deliberately get,

Angry, We don't hold grudges, All of these things, That are taught, In the Bible, Go back to, What Jesus teaches us, And what Jesus himself, Was like, So the donkey, Is important, As far as Jesus is concerned, It shows his own, Knowliness and humility, And it also shows, His kingdom, To be a kingdom of peace, Led by the king, Of peace, The Lord, Jesus Christ himself, Let's now say, The Lord's prayer together, We'll say it slowly, So that the young ones, Can follow with us, Our Father, Which 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 evil, For thine is the kingdom, And the power,

And the glory, Forever. Amen. Now we're going to turn to, Ezekiel chapter 37, For our study this morning, We're looking at the questions, That God, Throughout the Bible, Posed, When he asked certain people, Various questions, We've looked at, Six or seven of them, Before now, In different places, In the Bible, And today we're looking at, This question, In chapter 37, Of Ezekiel, And verse 3, Where Ezekiel was asked, By God, Son of man, Can these bones, Live?

Can these bones, Live? This vision that he had, Of this valley, Full of all of these bones, That had all dried up, And here's the question, That God said to him, And posed for him, Son of man, Can these bones, Live?

[21 : 47] What is this about? Well we need to do, First of all, A little bit of history, And history is always important, Especially when you come, To the prophets, And try and find out, The meaning of these prophecies, In the Old Testament, We need to be sure, We're setting them, In the right, Historical context, So that we know, Something of the events, Behind them, And why therefore, These prophets, Are saying what they're saying, And if you go to, Second Kings, Chapter 24, You'll find the background, To this passage, In Ezekiel there, One of the passages, As a background anyway, Where you find there, That the capture of Jerusalem, By Nebuchadnezzar, And the Chaldeans, Or also called the Babylonians, And that took place, Really in, 597 BC, 597 years before Christ, And we read there, That the sermons of Nebuchadnezzar, Came to Jerusalem, And the city, And the city was besieged, And then, The rest of the passage,

Tells you how, Nebuchadnezzar, Took all the important people, The craftsmen as well, And only left, The poorest people in the land, Left in Jerusalem, Took the rest away, To Babylon, As they would do, In those days, And, He placed, Another king, Instead of the king, Who was there at the time, Jehoiachin, He, He took him, And placed another king, Instead of him, He made his uncle, Who was called Mataniah, King in his place, And the reason he did that, Of course, Was to, Have a kind of puppet king, There that he could control, And that's what, Nebuchadnezzar did, And, He then, We read that, Zedekiah, Eleven years later, Rebelled against the, Nebuchadnezzar, And that's when, Jerusalem came to be destroyed, Along with the temple, Eleven years after, The first part, Of the captivity, Now, Ezekiel was taken captive, Along with that first group, In, 597 BC,

And, He was taken to, Babylon, Along with rest, And it's a very sad, Episode, In Ezekiel chapter 24, Where you find at verse 15, The word of the Lord came to me, Son of man, Behold, I am about to take, The delight of your eyes, Away from you, At a stroke, You shall not mourn, Nor weep, Nor shall your tears run down, Sigh, But not allowed, Make no mourning, For the dead, And then so, He said, I spoke to the people, In the morning, And at evening, My wife died, And on the next morning, I did, As I was commanded, Now that was a sign, A picture for the people, Of the seriousness, Of what had happened, They had made God angry, Yet displeased him, And he was arranging for them now, To go into captivity, And that had happened, By the time, Ezekiel, Began to minister, And so, That was, Before Jerusalem was destroyed, In 586,

And these dry bones, Therefore represent, Israel, In that condition, In that situation, You find that, If you go to, The same, This chapter 37, And you go forward to, Verse 17 there, Sorry, Verse 13, Sorry, Verse 11, Of chapter 37, 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 clean cut off, Therefore prophesy, And say to them, In other words, What Ezekiel is seeing, In this vision, All of these bones, Dried up in this valley, That he is taken to, They represent, The people, That he belongs to, In their present conditions, As they were then, And, We can apply, Much of that, Almost all of that, To periods, Later than this, When God, Brought,

Back, As it were, From deadness, From lack of spiritual life, Or vitality, In what's normally called, Revivals, It's the same principle, God at work, God bringing, To life, That which is dead, God adding to those, That actually know him, And follow him, And love him, It's this principle, Of revival, That you find here, In Ezekiel, Chapter 37, And so, We want to look, First of all, What he says about, These dry bones, And take some lessons, From that, And then we'll look, More fully at, The life giving breath, That's mentioned, Where Ezekiel is, Commanded by God, To pray, Or prophesy, To the breath, Where he has, Then the result of that, Where the bones, Began to stir, So he mentions, First of all, The dry bones, The hand of the Lord, Was upon me, He brought me out, In the spirit of the Lord,

[26 : 54] And set me down, In the middle of the valley, It was full of bones, 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, Now he's emphasizing there, For Ezekiel, Two things that he noticed, There were very many, And they were also very dry, And it's the dryness, Especially, That's emphasized, Above anything else, These bones, You get the impression, They were long exposed, To the sun, In this vision, And of course, That would dry them up, After a long time, But the reason, It's saying that, Is that it's making it obvious, There is no life, In them at all, There is just no life there, They're dry bones, Scattered around, Many of them, And the emphasis, Behold, They were very dry, And as you apply that, Spiritually, That applies to periods, In the history of the church, As well, Where spiritual life,

Where spiritual vitality, Has drained away, It applies, Even to a person, Individually, When you come, To know of, Spiritual drainage, In your own life, That's really what's happening, You're becoming more, And more like, And I'm becoming more, And more like, A dried up bone, That eventually, Will lose its vitality, If it's not attended to, If God doesn't come, With his quickening power, Which is what happens, In Ezekiel's vision here, So it's very, Very dry, And when you look at, Some parts of the New Testament, And you'll find the description, Of the church there, It's quite, Scary actually, How you can find, This kind of thing, Applying to the church, And yet the church, Is not really aware of it, You find, For example, In Revelation chapter 3, Where that letter, To Sardis, The church of Sardis, It says, I know, God is saying, I know your works, You have the reputation, Of being alive, But you are dead,

You see, The reputation, The outward form, Of what they had, Convinced them, That they were actually alive, That there was spiritual, Vitality there, And in fact, God is saying to them, It's not the case, You're actually dead, And you go forward, In the same chapter, To the church in Laodicea, I know your works, That you are neither hot, Nor cold, So because you are lukewarm, I will spew you out of my mouth, In other words, Jesus is actually saying, You're offensive to me, You sicken me, You're not anything like, What I would require, Or expect you, And you should be, For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, I need nothing, Not realising that you are wretched, Pitable, Poor, Blind, And naked, In other words, He's saying to them there, This is their own opinion, He's actually saying to them, This is what you think of yourselves, You think of yourselves, As well endowed spiritually, You're rich, You've prospered, You need nothing, And yet God is saying to them, You don't realise, That you're actually wretched,

And pitiable, And poor, And blind, And naked, That's what happens, You see, When people come to, Think of themselves, In their own abilities, Or in things that are in place outwardly, Where everything might be there, In terms of formality, But it lacks, It lacks life, There's no spiritual vitality there, And that's a scary thing, When God is saying, This is what your reputation is, But this is the reality, This is what you think of yourselves, But this is the reality, And God is giving us, Those details in his word, In prophecy, In the New Testament, In Revelation, So that we can actually look to ourselves, And, Well, What are the marks of life?

How do I know, That I'm not just, Formally a Christian, And nothing else? Because all of that, Can be in place, But yet, There's no vital, Spiritual life there, And it's just a warning to us, That sometimes, We can in fact, Delude ourselves, And the church, Can come to the condition, Where it says, I'm actually okay, I've got everything in place, I'm politically important, I have relations with government, I have all of these things, That I'm presenting to the world, By way of, Certain teachings, But you lack spiritual life, God is saying, And that's what, You find with Ezekiel, These bones, There are very many, There's not just one, Here and there, There's many of them, And they're very, Very dry, And here's the question, Son of man, Can these bones live, God is saying, Now when you say, Son of man, That's really in Ezekiel, Frequently, God addresses him as,

[31 : 44] Son of man, And that's really just, A contrast to God himself, Son of man means, Human life in itself, In its weakness, As compared with God, And it's there, With this question as well, Son of man, Can these bones live, There you are as a, As a human being, What's your opinion, He says, Can these bones live, And that's a question for us today as well, As it applies to ourselves, Not just to examine ourselves, But when you look out over the world, And when you look at all the, Dry bones that you see, When you know that there are people, Who claim to be Christians, And yet their life makes it obvious, That they're not really, Christians in the vital living sense, As far as can be seen, Because we're told in the Bible, It's our outward fruit, It's what we are, In terms of our obedience to Christ, And things that shows, Whether our profession is, Is correct or not, Question is, Can these bones live,

And when I put it to myself, Here's the question for me today, Am I as spiritually alive, As I should be, Do I have that vitality, In my own relationship with God, And with other people, That I ought to have, Do I really want to be revived, Do I want to be quickened, Do I want to be the kind of person, That God expects me to be, More than I am presently, Do I want to advance, In spiritual life, Do I want to grow, In my vitality, In my relationship with God, Because the answer to the question, Is an obvious yes, Can these bones live, Yes of course, You know that God can do it, Whether it's of yourself, And myself, Or the world around us, Or the church, In the widest sense, The answer to the question, Is an obvious yes, But do I want it, Am I concerned for this, So concerned, That I will appeal to God, And plead with God, Until it happens, We require to be revived,

It's obvious, To anyone in the present day, That when you look at the church at large, And its influence in the world, Its influence positively, Especially for the gospel, Its influence in terms of, Being used by God, To bring people to life, It's very minimal, Compared to what you would like it to be, Minimal compared to, Periods even, In times gone by, Do I want this, Do I want to see this, Do I want to see it, On God's terms, Do I want revival, As God describes it, Do I want the kind of, Spiritual restoration, And uplift, That I read about in the Bible, That I read about in history, Is that something, Just for a bygone age, Does it belong to previous generations, With no relevance at all, To our generation, Of course it doesn't, It's something that Ezekiel, And this passage in Ezekiel, Is teaching us, Always, We need to look for, Spiritual life and vitality, And we need to pray for that,

And we need to pray as we'll see, To the spirit of God, For that to come about, Can these bones live, They're so dry, There's no life in them, Can they live, Well let's see, The next part of the passage, The life giving breath, Or spirit, I said to him, I said to him, Oh Lord God, You know, Then he said to me, Prophecy over these bones, And say to them, And, The words there, Are really literally, Prophecy upon these bones, Prophets, Gave out the word, Of the Lord, Perhaps think prophets, In the Old Testament, Were, Were just there, To predict the future, And there is an element, Of that in it, Because God, Very often giving them, To see what the future will be, As he unfolds it, But they are there, As spokespeople, Spokesmen for God, The prophet is, A mouthpiece of God,

He delivers God's word, That's why you so often, Find the prophet saying, Hear the word, Of the Lord, Thus says the Lord, In the words, What the prophet was saying, As God gave him the insight, Is in fact, God's word to the people, And what he's saying here is, Prophecy upon these bones, And that's important, He's directing the prophecy, Upon the bones, He's speaking directly, To them, He's not speaking above them, Beyond them, He's not bypassing them, And that is a hugely, Important point to make, About preaching, Because when you preach the gospel, When you're hearing the gospel preached, You want to hear the gospel preached, Upon you, Not beyond you, Not behind you, Not past you, Not above you, It has to be upon you, It has to actually be, The kind of deliverance, The kind of preaching, That speaks at you, And at your condition, That's what we try to do, Sometimes very poorly, I know, In preaching the gospel,

[36 : 51] We preach, At the dead bones, We preach, Preach at living people, And you see the content, Of the message, That, Ezekiel had to give, He says, Prophecy over these bones, And say to them, O dry bones, Hear the word of the Lord, And then he goes on, Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will cause breath, To enter you, And you shall live, I will lay sinews upon you, And flesh shall come upon you, And so on, That's what he had to prophesy, Upon these bones, And the end result, Of course, As described, Was that they came to life, The bones came together, But verse 6b, The final part of verse 6, There is really important, You shall live, And you shall know, That I am the Lord, You see, That's always the end result, That God has in mind, He doesn't just bring people to life, And leave it at that, As if they didn't know himself, When God brings you to life, He brings you to life, To know himself,

He brings you to life, In relation to himself, He brings you to life, So that you will know him as God, That you will know him, In a personal way, A personal living relationship, With him, You shall know, That I am the Lord, And to know him, As the provider, As the creator, As the saviour, As the deliverer, Every single way, In which God is, In his relation to his people, You shall know it, He's saying, What a great emphasis that is, When you come, Through the Lord's power, To acknowledge him, To receive him, As your saviour, Then you shall know, The Lord, And you know, Very often, Through the prophets, You'll find in the major prophets, Like Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, And also like, Minor prophets, As we call them, Like Hosea, Hosea, For example, Frequently says, You shall know the Lord, They had lost, As a people, Their living relationship, With God, They knew things,

They knew, Spiritual activities, They knew, The sacrifices, They knew, To an extent, The word, And the promises, They knew, Formally, Who they were, As a people, But they did not know the Lord, They had lost that vital, Living link with God, And you shall know, The Lord is what he is saying, So what then happens, Well, There is a response, As he prophesied, And that is important too, Was as he prophesied, As I was commanded, As I prophesied, Verse 7, There was a sound, And behold, A rattling, And the bones came together, Bone to its bone, And I looked, There were silues on them, And flesh had come upon them, And skin had covered them, And of course you find, A famous chorus, Based on these words, But what you, What you find there, The detail is, There's movement, There's sound, First of all, And there's movement, There's a joining together, Of bone,

To its bone, Not just in any old jumbled way, But so as to make, A skeleton, As it is, In a human being, Bone to its bone, And then there's, They're joining together, The bones, And then there's sinews, And then there's flesh, Now that reminds us, That when God works, He works, In terms of restoring, The right order of things, These bones were all scattered, In the valley, They had been separated, They had been laid for years, They were dried up with the sun, And now as God, As the prophesying, Of God's word upon them, Begins to have its effect, God is actually dealing, With that scattering, And with that deadness, And he's bringing, All of this together, These bones, In the right order, And that's what you find, With God, When God works, In a saving way, He takes what sin, As damaged, What sin, As broken, That's the nature of sin, That's the nature, Of our fallenness, When you look at yourself, As a fallen human being,

In the light of God's word, And it's teaching, What you find is, That within yourself, Things are just a mess, All the connections, That were there, When we were created, Between our conscience, And our mind, And our emotions, And our will, All of these connections, As they were operating, Then perfectly, They've become broken, The internal workings, Of the human computer, Are no longer what they were, As God created them, What happens, When God actually, Begins, And when he does his work, Of restoration, When he brings us to life, When he actually, Creates life in us, What he does, Is he brings all, Of these faculties, That have been damaged, And have been lying, Dried out, Brings them back, To a right order, He brings them to be, Properly related to each other, And not only, In our individual persons, It's the same, With broken relationships, And God sets about,

[41 : 58] The work of mending, That's what he does, He doesn't actually, Leave it, Somewhat repaired, He brings it together, So that, It's as it should be, It's as it once was, As it's intended to be, And grace, God's grace, God at work, God's power, Is the greatest, Unifying force, In existence, And that's what you find, And illustrated, Demonstrated there, Each came together, Bone to its bone, And today, For our personal lives, For our own, Individual lives, For our relationships, What do we require, For all of that, To be working properly, Properly related, To each other, The grace of God, The power of God, The spirit of God, As we'll see in a moment, But you see, It's saying, All of that took place,

But, There was no, Breath, In them, Verse 8, There was no, Breath, In them, And that reminds us, Of something else, That's very important, That, Under the gospel, It's possible, To have things, Formally, In a right relation, Formally, In the right place, And yet, Lack, Life, We can have everything, In place, In our, Congregational settings, In our lives, Individually, Just as Israel, Had in their experience, Wasn't that they, Lacked religion, It wasn't that they, Lacked sacrifices, Wasn't that they, Lacked activity, Of that kind, But you can have, All of that, Without spiritual, Life, That's what he's saying, There was no, Breath, There was no, Life in them, And then the next, Part of the passage, Takes us to the next step, Then he said to me, Come, He said, And prophesy,

To the breath, In verse 9, 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, Now the interesting thing is, That in Hebrew, The word breath, The same word as you find, For the word spirit, It's also used for the wind, The Hebrew word, Ruach, Not to be confused, With someone who comes from point, Ruach means, Either spirit, Or breath, Or it can also mean, The wind, In nature, And depending on the context, You actually have to work out, Well what is the meaning, Of that word in Hebrew, What is the meaning of that word, In the context, In which you find it, And here obviously, Because it goes on to say, In verse 14, I will put my spirit within you, Means ultimately, God's holy spirit, It's the holy spirit, That's in mind, And what he's being asked is, Well what he's being commanded is,

Prophesy to the breath, Prophesy to the spirit, Prophesy to the one, Who brings life, Who's going to bring life, Into this dead form, Of these bones, Even though they've been brought together, They lack life, Where's the life, Going to come from, It's going to come from the breath, It's going to come from the spirit, So prophesy, To the breath, Now interestingly, Notice the difference, He had to prophesy, Upon the bones, But now he has to prophesy, To the spirit, In other words, He has to call, For the spirit to come, He's delivering the prophecy, To the bones, The word of God, To the dead bones, But he has to prophesy, At the same time, To the spirit, Upon the bones, It reaches them, Where they are, But then he comes, To prophesy, To the spirit, Now that reminds you, Doesn't it, Of God creating, Man in the beginning, First man he created,

Made from the dust, Of the ground, Genesis chapter 2, And verse 7, And then you read that, God breathed, Into him, The breath of life, And man became, A living soul, There was the outward form, The physical form, Created from the dust, Fashioned by God, But it lacked life, And the life came, From the breath of God, This is not just talking about, Life in the sense, That we have lungs, And we can breathe, Life in that sense, It's in addition, To what we are physically, This means spiritual life, Spiritual life, Spiritual vitality, Came from, The spirit of God, God breathing into, The human that he had made, There are two sides to that, There's a negative side, First of all, Where you can emphasize, That there is no, Spiritual life, Without the Holy Spirit,

[47 : 03] Of God present, To create it, Doesn't matter how much, We do things, Doesn't matter how many, Activities we have, There is no spiritual life, Without the spirit of God, But then you have to, Emphasize, The positive side of it as well, It's not enough to, Emphasize, As we often do, The spiritual, Negative side of things, It's so important, To go from that, To the positive side as well, And the positive side of it, Is where the spirit of God, Is at work, Savingly, There is always life, That's the encouraging thing, There is always life, When it's the spirit, That's at work, That's why we call, For the spirit to come, That's why we pray, To the spirit, And for the spirit, Of God to come, Go back to the previous chapter, In Ezekiel, And you'll find that set out, There in verses there, 24 to 28, I will take you from the nations, And gather you from all the countries, And bring you into your own land, And I will sprinkle clean water on you, And you shall be clean,

From all your uncleannesses, From all your idols, I will cleanse you, And I will give you a new heart, And a new spirit, I will put within you, And I will remove the heart of stone, From your flesh, And I will give you a heart of flesh, And I will put my spirit within you, And cause you to walk, And my statutes, And be careful to obey my rules, You shall dwell, In the land that I gave to your fathers, And you shall be my people, And I will be your God, And notice the emphasis there, I will put my spirit within you, That's going forward into the future of course, But that's always what happens, When God revives, This is what he is doing, He is putting his spirit within us, He's bringing people to life, Through being born again, And it's on a wider scale, When it happens many times, To many people at the same time, Or within a short period, That's really revival, And the principle of it is the same, As you find in John chapter 3, Jesus to Nicodemus, These well-known words that you know, When Nicodemus said,

How can a man be born when he is old? And Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water, And of the spirit, He cannot enter the kingdom of God, That which is born of the flesh, Is flesh, And that which is born of the spirit, Is spirit, Do not marvel that I said to you, You must be born again, When the wind blows where it wishes, And you hear its sound, But you do not know where it comes from, Or where it goes, So it is with everyone, Who is born of the spirit, See the connection there, Interestingly, Between wind and spirit, The Holy Spirit, Just as you find in the Old Testament here, With Ezekiel, The breath, The wind, The spirit, John is saying, This is really what is important, That without the spirit, There is no life, But by the spirit, There is life, And life in its fullness, Because as it says there, You find, So is everyone who is born of the spirit, So when we are praying for revival,

Whenever we are praying for God, To revive his cause, To revive ourselves, It is important to actually take note of this fact, That you begin praying for revival, When you pray to the spirit, When you call for the spirit of God, As we are privileged to do, When we appeal to Jesus, To the father, To actually send the spirit, In a greater way, In a powerful way, That is what he is really, Anticipating here, You pray for revival, But you remember, You pray for, To the spirit, You pray for the spirit to come, You are calling upon God, To send the breath, Into us, And all of this is really, For encouragement, Just want to finish with this, Notice verses 11, On to 16, 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 clean cut off,

Now, God is saying, Through Ezekiel, Listen to what the word of the Lord says, Because that is, That is a counter to the gloom, That you are presently experiencing, Or what you are saying, About yourselves, And, It is not surprising, That they are saying, This about themselves, Because, Even the rebuilding, That would take place, Later on, Through, Zechariah, And, When they went back, To Jerusalem, To rebuild the temple, And the foundations, And the walls of Jerusalem, As you know from Haggai, It was a great mourning, Among the people, They looked at this, And they said, Well, That is pathetic, That is, That, What is that in comparison, To what we had, What is that in comparison, To the wonderful temple, That Solomon built, And that the Babylonians, Flattened, God is saying, Through,

[52 : 11] Zechariah, Chapter 4, And verses, 6 to 7, And verse 10, Not by might, Nor by power, But by my spirit, Says the Lord, And he goes on to speak, About those who despise, The day of small things, That they shall ultimately, Come and rejoice, And we, Perhaps are also, In danger of despising, The day of small things, We're living in a day, In many ways, Of small things, But be thankful, For the small things, Be thankful for the fact, That God is still at work, That he's not gone, That he's still showing evidence, That his gospel is effective, That people are being brought, To the gospel, And brought alive, Through the gospel, That dead bones, Are coming to life, That God is actually at work, Despite the conditions, That you find in the world, And one of the great things, That's encouraging to us, At this time of continuing, Restriction and lockdown, Is that you hear of people,

Who are being blessed, Through the gospel, As it's being, Disseminated online, As it's being preached, As I'm trying to preach today, In a live stream, Or record it, Whatever, But it's still the same gospel, Hence the same God, And he knows, What this providence is about, That he has, In a sovereignty, Brought upon the world, So don't lose heart, Don't despair, We serve the God, Of restoration, The God of resurrection, The God of life, The God of the spirit, The God of the breath, Can these bones live?

Absolutely, Why are we so convinced, These bones can live? Because, We know, Of the Holy Spirit, And we know, What the Holy Spirit can do, And we have access to God, To pray to the spirit, To look to the spirit, How did, The apostle Paul, Encourage the Corinthians, In that great passage, In 1 Corinthians 15, There were people in Corinth, Who had questioned, The reality of resurrection, Had lost heart, Maybe over that as well, So the question, Would apply to them, Well can these dead bones live?

What does, What does God have, For the future? What can we anticipate, In the future? Well in chapter 15, I'm going to just read, These verses in conclusion, Of 1 Corinthians 15, At verse 50, I tell you this brothers, Flesh and blood, Cannot inherit the kingdom of God, Nor does the perishable, Inherit the imperishable, Behold, I tell you a mystery, We shall not all sleep, We shall all be changed, In a moment, In the twinkling of an eye, At the last trumpet, For the trumpet will sound, And the dead will be raised imperishable, And we shall be changed, For this perishable body, Must put on the imperishable, And this mortal must put on immortality, When the perishable puts on the imperishable, And the mortal puts on immortality, Then shall come to pass the saying, That is written, Death is swallowed up in victory, O death, Where is your victory, O death, Where is your sting, The sting of death is sin, And the power of sin is the law, But thanks be to God, Who gives us the victory, Through our Lord Jesus Christ,

There is Paul saying, We believe in a God, The God of the resurrection, The God of the spirit, The God of the breath, And despite the fact that things may be low at times, And we may be discouraged at times, And may have a preponderance to gloom, As the people in Ezekiel 37, Were actually said to be, Nevertheless, You're thankful today, That 1 Corinthians 15, Didn't finish it, Where we finished that reading, Therefore, My beloved brothers, Be steadfast, Immovable, Always abounding in the work of the Lord, Knowing that in the Lord, Your labour is never in vain, Can these dead bones live?

[56 : 21] Yes, Pray to the spirit, Preach upon the bones, Wait for God, To do his work, Let's pray, Lord our God, We thank you that you're the God of life, Not only so, You're the one who brings the dead to life, We give thanks Lord, For that spiritual resurrection, That has taken place in the life of all, Whom you have brought to know you spiritually, That you have brought them alive in their own souls, That you have brought them from deadness to life, We thank you to us, We anticipate that final resurrection from the dead, Of how you will bring your people, At that point, To the inheritance that you have laid up for them, In heaven forevermore, In the eternal kingdom, Lord our God, Help us, We pray, To be encouraged to go on serving you now, And to do so,

In a way that will be steadfast, And removable, Always abounding in the work of the Lord, Knowing that in the Lord our labour, Whatever we may think of it, Is never in vain, Hear us now, We pray for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Now we're going to conclude by singing Psalm 126, 126, That's on page 419, That's in the Scottish Psalter version, When Zion's bondage God turned back, As men had dreamed were we, Then filled with laughter was our mouth, Our tongue with melody, And that psalm is in very much, It brings us to the fulfilment, Really, Of what God was saying, To Ezekiel, And through Ezekiel, Where he brought his people, From their bondage of captivity, Back to Jerusalem, And of course that follows through, Into their own experience, Of God bringing us to life, When Zion's bondage God turned back, When Zion's bondage God turned back, As men that dreamed were we, Then filled with laughter, Then filled with laughter, Then filled with laughter, Then filled with laughter, Then filled with laughter,

Our tongue with melody, They among the heathens said, The Lord great things for them
hath wrought, The Lord hath done great things for us, Whence joy to us is brought, As
streams of water in the south, Outbondage Lord recall, Who sowed tears, A reaping time,
Of joy and joy they shall, That man who bearing precious seed, In going forth does mourn,
He doubtless bringing back his sheaves, Rejoicing shall return.

[59 : 57] And now may grace and mercy and peace from God the Father, the Son and the Holy
Spirit be with you and with all whom you love, now and evermore. Amen.

Well let me thank you again for joining with us for this service. If you're able to please join
us again this evening at 6.30pm when Reverend Kenny I. MacLeod will be conducting that
service.

Meantime may God continue to bless you and keep you safe and through his word
continue to give you that spiritual vitality. Thank you.