

## March 26 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent Sermon

Ezekiel is talking about a valley of very dry bones.

Do you have dry bones – Is your knee or hip bone on bone?

Have you tried that shark fin oil, Coconut oil, fish oil, it's all supposed to help.

Turmeric - that's the one, Turmeric heals everything.

Ezekiel is talking about dry, dry bones.

How dry is dry?

If you go camping around central Australia, you come across a slight problem – there is long dry grass almost everywhere where you go.



This grass is as dry as dry can be – you can't light a fire (that's the real problem ) and the dry grass has all kinds of creepy crawlies in it.

So when it's camp time you have to find a spot that is free of dry grass – so you can camp safely.

On our last Hermannsburg trip, we travelled for miles and mile trying to find a clear spot.

Finally, we found a spot. It wasn't ideal but it was clear. Who knows when the next clear spot might be.

This spot seemed to be a dumping ground for old holdens – it so dry that these cars hardly have any rust even though they have been lying there for , 30, 40, 50 years.



This place we camped seemed just like the place that Ezekiel was describing - a valley full off dry, dry, bones.



There were dry old bones every-where.

I went to sleep and dreamed of my dogs – I was feeding my dogs in my dream.

We're south Aussies and we have fair idea about what dry is.

Dry is the absence of any kind of life.



I believe God's is showing Ezekiel this picture of dryness to make the point that there is no life at all in dry old bones.



God is showing Ezekiel a valley of the shadow of death.

God is showing Ezekiel a place with no hope, no life, no future – nothingness.

God has set the scene now he will show Ezekiel who has the power to create life.

*“Ezekiel can these bones live?”*

*“Sovereign LORD, you alone know.”*

*Ezekiel speak to these dry bones – I want you to say this: ‘Dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 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 he is the LORD.’”*

*So I spoke as I was commanded. As I was speaking, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone on bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them.*

*Then God said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, and say to it, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Come, breath, from the four winds and breathe into the dead, 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.*

*Then he said to me: “Ezekiel, these bones are the people of Israel.*

*They think that they are dried up and thier hope is gone; they think thy are cut off from me.*

*Ezekiel, say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says: My people, I am going to open your graves and bring you up from them; I will bring you back to the land of Israel. 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.’”*

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Our Gospel is about Jesus raising Lazarus to life.

To make the point that God gives life we have Lazarus dead four days. As Jesus approached the grave – he is stopped by Martha – in the King James Versions Martha says to Jesus, “don’t go in there Lord he Stinketh”.

Lazarus was really dead, he really stunk, Jesus really gave him life.

The Israelites were really dead, and God breathed them back to life.

This next picture is about 50 kilometres from the dead dry bones.

These kids are full of life. They love Jesus.



These ladies are full of life – they are from the Central Australian ladies Choir who went to Germany. They starred in that movie “the Song Keepers”.

The whole idea behind that trip to Germany was that they wanted to thank the Germans for sending the missionaries to Hermannsburg.

They wanted to say Thank you for the gospel in song.

Many missions across the world have left a trail of destruction and abuse.

Please know and believe the Lutheran Missionaries are honoured by the aboriginal people. We have a mission principle which is unique to the Lutheran church. We learn the language, then we teach and train local leaders to do ministry – it’s that simple.

I wish we had time to show you what a valley of dry bones the country around Hermannsburg was when the graziers came. It was overrun with cattle. It was a place where Aboriginal people were killed for sport. It’s pristine waterholes were polluted by cattle and horse (and still are). It was a place where women were targeted – and their pale babies were killed.

Somewhere, somehow a government person declared Hermannsburg to be a refuge, a sanctuary for Aboriginal people – so all the mixed up families, sacred to death came to Hermannsburg the refuge and were welcomed by people of God – who protected them and showed them the love of God.

Life in the desert of death and abuse and bones – we are a part of that life.

Life comes from the word of God – as Ezekiel discovered.

Into the worst of the worst – we can bring life.

It's our privilege – it's our commission.

As we speak we speak with a promise of God: *“My Word which goes from My mouth will not return to Me empty. It will do what I want it to do, and will carry out My plan well” (Isaiah 55:11).*

You are not good with words?? – your loving actions have the same promise.

*“I can **do** all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philipians 4:13*

*“Whatever you **do**, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” Colossians 3:23-24*

On Wednesday night we had the story of the miserable life of gaol, drugs, violence, and standover over tactics some of the Long Riders have been through.

And how God's word transformed some of the most hardened criminals to soft, kind, evangelists.

We thank Ezekiel for simply doing what God asked of him – and we thank God for the blessing of life in Israel.

*Jesus says: The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that you may have and enjoy life, and have life in abundance.  
(John 10:10)*

**Lord we have had the life lesson shown to Ezekiel in many and varied ways. Help to trust that you word in our mouth is a mighty and powerful thing. Amen.**