



Pre-Sermon Video: **Light of the World**

## Getting the Nod



**Illustration on the Importance of Focus:** When the Alaskan Pipeline was being built between 1975 and 1977, there were many Texans who went to Alaska and found work on the pipeline. The Texans could only work a few hours in the frigid weather, yet the Eskimos, the native Alaskans, could work indefinitely in the cold.

They decided to do a study to find out why the Eskimos could withstand the weather. After much study they found that there were no physiological differences between the Eskimos and the Texans. There was nothing in skin thickness, blood, or any other thing physically that would explain the differences in the ability to withstand the temperatures. The solution came when they did a psychological study. **The difference was the Eskimo said, "He knows it was cold but there was a job to be done." In other words, his focus was on the job and obtaining results rather than on the weather.** The Texan focused on the weather and this kept him from focusing on the job at hand. (Taken from the Movie 5th Quarter).

**Application:** You and I will focus on one of two things this week. We will either focus on how bad things are, the protests, the violence, social media, and the frustrations that come with them... or we will focus on Christ, His Word, and what the church must become during this moment in time. Just like those Eskimos who focused on the job rather than the weather... it's time we stop using our opinions and comparisons as hammers and start focusing on JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS!!!

**Transition:** So, back to Amos 5:24, keep focusing on praying for those two things, JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. Don't allow the news... or that irritating soul on social media... or that belligerent family member... or any politician blind your focus!!! Nothing will positively happen without the two-fold reality in Amos 5:24. Let's read together that verse again...

## Connecting Us

NKJV | Am 5:24 **But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream.**

### Why Justice and Righteousness?

1. **Justice deals with the past, righteousness deals with the future.**
2. **Justice doesn't deal with the heart, righteousness deals with the heart.**
3. **Justice pleases man, righteousness pleases God.**

**In Amos, what would it look like for justice to roll?** You see, justice is rooted in the very nature of God. So, when injustice occurs and crimes are committed, **justice then demands appropriate punishment without rewarding revenge. Honoring revenge is never a God-like outcome with justice.** Violence is never an acceptable behavior in biblical justice.

**Look at NLT | Ps 37:8-9** Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper— it only leads to harm. 9 For the wicked will be destroyed, but those who trust in the LORD will possess the land.

So, justice God's way is handling injustice with a proactive outcome. The right thing being done to address injustice and to point everyone to a better place to be. **That's justice.**

**But in Amos, what would it look like for righteousness to flow like a mighty stream?**

**In order for righteousness to flow, there must be a focus on both a biblical standard and a visible example to follow.** The biblical standard is the life of Jesus and the church is supposed to be the visible example for the world to follow. **That's flowing righteousness.**

**Transition:** Jesus is the best standard to reach for... but how is the American Church doing as far as being an example for people to follow? Maybe we should have listened to Alexander Solzhenitsyn.



**Illustration of Alexander Solzhenitsyn and his Harvard Grad Speech:** A Russian Author and Nobel Peace Prize winner, surprised Harvard students when he told the 1978 graduating class these things:

In 1989 the unthinkable happened. After seventy years of communism and forty years of the Cold War, the Iron Curtain fell and the brutal, sadistic power of the U.S.S.R. began to disintegrate. After seventy years of enforced state sanctioned atheism, the moral compass of the nation was seriously damaged. They did not have God and His Word as a moral reference point to make wise choices. So, they were looking for a new compass. After living here a few years, this is what he said.

**He said he could not recommend Western civilization to his beloved Russia.** He called America to remember Russia's history, and to commit to memory what happens to a nation when it forgets God. The solution he offered to the West was for it to return to God and once more reclaim its spiritual vitality. And then He offered an example of who we had become... The Church at Corinth. The church mentioned had been influenced by the world... instead of it influencing the world.

## God's Direction for the Church

**I feel that the recent months and events we have experienced have opened up an opportunity for the Lord to ask us a question that is found in Ezekiel 37. That question is from God to Ezekiel, "Can these bones live?"**

### The Backstory:

- This is about a vision that God allowed Ezekiel to see in a valley. It is during the Babylonian Captivity in 587 BC. The armies of Babylon forced the rebellious city of Jerusalem into being deported to Babylon.
- For those Jews forced to live in Babylon, the future seemed like a black hole into which the people were destined to disappear.
- A century-and-a-half previously, many citizens of Judah's sister kingdom Israel had been similarly deported, had lost their identity, and had faded into the mists of history--the so-called lost tribes of Israel.
- The exile was more than just a crisis of physical suffering and national identity. It was also a crisis of faith. The key symbols of Judean faith--Jerusalem, its temple, its people, and the monarchy of David--had been destroyed.

- Now, many exiled Jews assumed that their deity had been defeated by a stronger deity from Babylon.
- The people wondered if God was truly the Lord and if He could be found faithful.
- It is in this environment of discouragement and suffering that God takes Ezekiel to a valley of dry bones.

NKJV | Eze 37:1-10 The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. 2 Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed, they were very dry. 3 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So, I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know." 4 Again He said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! 5 Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: "Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. 6 I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD." ' " 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. 8 Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. 9 Also 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 breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

**The bones represent the people of God. We are the people of God!** And we have been taken captive by our own making. The Church of Jesus Christ has become a mirror for the Church at Corinth! The world has become more valuable to us than the world sees our value to them. **The condition of the world has largely become chaos because the Church is no where to be found!**

**I love this church and find righteousness flowing from it constantly...** but much of the American Church has lost its worldview for a penthouse view.

This passage gives us a pathway back to vibrancy and authority again... but we have to take what God has been trying to tell us recently and get back up! **Church... the world needs us lead again... but we have to want the best God has for us than the best the world has to offer us!**

**So, let's look at Ezekiel 37 again...**

**What is the Church Supposed to Do?**

**1. The hand of God needs to lead us.**

- The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.
- When was the last time we could say that the hand of God was upon us and the Holy Spirit is leading us?
- It was that leadership that took Ezekiel to where he needed to be... so he could see God's lesson!
- **We need God's hand on us again and His Holy Spirit leading us again to feel God's heart!**

**2. The vision of God needs to convince us.**

- Until I read this passage in preparation for this sermon, I had not really seen this phrase. I just tried to imagine walking with Zeke in the valley. God leads him back and forth among the bones, a great many bones.
- The context is not one trip around the valley... but a detailed and thorough investigation of the dry bones. **God wants Ezekiel to get it.**
- **Church, we need for the Lord to give us a whole lot more than info for social media... we need to be broken and burdened for people... all people!!!**

### 3. The question of God needs to challenge us.

- 3 And He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So, I answered, "O Lord GOD, You know."
- So, in our relevant application of Ezekiel 37, can the Church live again? Can we weep again? Can we care again? Can we lead again? Can He revive us?
- **Have we forgotten the God of miracles and power? Can He still use us? God never intended us to be adequate; He intended us to be dependent!!!**

### 4. The call of God has to energize us.

- 4 Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD!"
- 7 So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.
- Faith thinks bigger. True believers know that God's got something going! True Christians believe in rattling!!! And we believe in dead things breathing again.

### 5. The promise of God has to change us.

- 10 So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.
- **Ezekiel saw the new army... and the new potential... and his focus was fixed! Don't focus on what divides us... focus on what God is doing to change us!!!**

Transition: Let's close with this...

### Drawing the Net:

**Final Illustration on Climbing... not Falling:** A five-year-old boy kept asking his dad to help him climb a very large tree in their backyard. So, he lifted his son onto the tree's lowest branch, the boy panicked for fear of falling. His dad tried to coach him along, telling him to first kneel on the branch, then slowly stand up and climb to the center of the tree. But the only thing the boy could think of was falling. He kept whining and crying, "I'm going to fall! I'm going to fall!" The father was unable to coax him, but he got an idea. He shouted, "**Son! Don't think about falling; think about climbing.**" He thought about that for a moment, and then he proceeded to stand and climb to the center of the tree. His fear was gone, and he was able to do what he wanted.

The next week he asked to climb the same tree again. This time he said, "Daddy, this time I will think about climbing." He climbed confidently right up into the middle of the tree.

**It is time to focus, Church! Not on what someone says on Facebook... or someone says on television... or what recent insult has angered you. It's time to focus on being the Church.**

**So, you want to change what's going on?**

- **Pray daily for justice and righteousness**
- **Do more than talk like the church, be the church.**
- **Desire to see God's kingdom to come down... not like dry bones... but warriors!!**