

**Sermon, March 26, 2023**  
**Ezekiel 37:1-14; Romans 8:6-11**  
**“Living Your Best Life: Are We Yet Alive?”**  
**Rev. Dr. Brian Jones, Senior Pastor**



I wanted to take a few moments and show you this picture. Any idea what we are looking at? This is a part of the riverbed of the Euphrates river. Of course, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers are two of the main sources of fresh water in the middle east from Syria into Iran. They form, as you'll remember from school, the fertile crescent where much of civilization began. There are some, and take this with a grain of salt because I don't know how scholarly it is, but who surmise that the garden of Eden sat in the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

But right now, it's drying up. There is a severe drought in that region, and this massive river, the Euphrates, is so far down that one can walk across the bed of the river. Not in every place, but in many of the places. Some scientists say that if this trend continues, the Euphrates river could dry up completely by 2040.

Interestingly enough in the book of Revelation, it talks about the Euphrates River drying up. Now, I am in no way saying that the drying up of the Euphrates River is a sign of the end times. I'm not saying it's not. I am, though, pointing out that the Bible does speak to times when this river dries up.

Which is amazing, the Euphrates River looks like this normally. Isn't that amazing it went from this mighty beautiful, lush river providing life in a more arid part of the world to this. Why? Well, there has been a drought. Nor have there been conditions to replenish the river, snow doesn't come down from mountains, all the things we need for the river right now aren't there. When you take that which replenishes and brings health and life into something and remove it, dryness is the result.

Most of us have seen this happen with a common ordinary rubber band. They stretch, they have elasticity, meaning they can stretch but also revert to their original form. But leave them out in the sun, and eventually that which gives elasticity and mobility is lessened, it's not replenished, and the result is the rubber band will become so dry it will either break, or it just crumbles.

Now, that dryness doesn't happen in an instant. It's a gradual process. The river didn't begin to dry up overnight. For a while, it had plenty of resources even though it wasn't trying to be a river. But eventually, that lack of resources, that lack of that which renewed it, caught up with it. That's how dryness happens. For a river, for a rubber band, and for a soul.

As you looked at those images of the riverbed, did you look at it and say *that's me? That's a great image of my soul. I'm just feeling spiritually dry right now. I feel as if I'm in a drought. My spirit is just dry. It's cracked and dry. I feel stretched like that rubber band, and if I'm pulled just a bit more, I'm going to snap or crumble.*

There are a lot of things that can cause our spirit to dry up. Life itself can dry your spirit. It doesn't have to be some great calamity, some horrible problem that's come along. Sometimes, just the ordinary day in and day out events of life can dry you out. And like that river, it can happen slowly, you might not even notice it until it is too late. We get busy with life, and or a relationship with Christ, while it's still important for us, in reality, it gets shoved aside.

Stress can dry you out. If you are living your life in a constant state of stress, you are going to experience spiritual dryness. It's going to dry your spirit. Family stress, health stress, marriage stress, work, whatever it might be. If that's a 24/7 attitude for you, you can't help but experience that dryness of spirit.

And of course, rebellion dries us out. If you are in a constant struggle as to who is going to be lord of your life, Jesus or yourself, you are going to have spiritual dryness. God cannot replenish you when you are in rebellion as to who is lord of your life. The riverbed of your soul is going to dry up at some point.

If that dry riverbed is the image for your spiritual life, I want you to hear a few things. One is that God loves you even in the most driest moments of your life. Secondly, dryness does not have to be the image of your spirit. It doesn't have to remain dry. And the truth is, you cannot live your best life possible if your spirit is dry. And that's what we have been exploring, isn't it? As we have gone on this trek through Lent, we have asked what is my best life Biblically? The world will tell you what your best life is, but it's not. So, Biblically, what is my best life? We cannot live our best life if we are in a constant state of spiritual dryness.

Let's go back to our passage of Scripture from Ezekiel. I love this passage of Scripture. It's so powerful. God takes Ezekiel to the valley, and it's full of what? Dry bones. Now, we will later see that this is Israel. But it's also you and me. This is us when we are spiritually dry, that's what our lives are like, bleached out dry, no function, can't take stress, and have no purpose.

And God says *can these bones live again?* Now, Ezekiel covers himself by essentially saying what are you asking me for? I mean, You're the Almighty. But it's a great question. And this is a question we need to ask ourselves. Can these bones live again? Is it possible that I don't have to live in spiritual dryness? Do we believe that God can replenish us? Is it possible? Do you believe our bones can live again? Do you recognize you are spiritually dry, and do you believe that God can make you alive again?

And then it happens, the bones are knit back together. And there are miracles. Tendons, sinews grow, tissue is formed, they are all ready, they are knit back together. But they are not alive. See, you can have all the right parts, do all the right things, and still be spiritually dry. And I think that's a great image of the church today. We do all the right things, great worship, and we have studies, and we have missions. And yet we still can be so spiritually dry. We have all the pieces, but there is something that still is not there. We are so often like Adam in the garden, perfectly formed yet not alive, we are like this lady knit together perfectly, we look good to the world but dead inside. You can't live your best life if you are dead.

So what brings them back to life? It's what brings Adam back to life. In both cases, God breathes. And when he feels His breath, life comes. But you can't feel someone's breath from across the room. How close do you have to be to feel someone's breath? It's an intimate connection.

And here is what Jesus wants to have with you. An intimate connection where you are so close you can feel the breath of God on your face, you can feel the intimacy and the power of the Holy Spirit in your life. You can't live your best life by holding God at arm's length. Spiritually being alive again isn't about having all the right things in place. It's about having a desire of intimacy with a God who desires intimacy with us.

If your life is dry, if your soul is dry right now, let me ask you this. Do you believe those bones can live again? If your relationship with someone is dry, do you believe it can be alive again; if life has dried you out, do you believe these bones can live? If so, you can live your best life possible.

How do we do that? Intimacy comes with time. Are you spending time with God every day? Is that a priority for you? Do you give God permission to do whatever He wants with that time?

Do you have a city around you, a few people who foster in you a desire and intimacy with Christ? Who pray for you, hold you accountable, bringing you close to Jesus? Intimacy with Christ is often in the intimacy of community. We need to be that community for one another.

Ask. It really is that simple. Jesus, I want an intimate relationship with you. And if you pray that, you will flourish. You will be revived, you will live. Can dead bones live again? Yes, our best life is possible. Amen.