*The hand of the Lord came upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me: “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered: “O Lord God, you know.” Then He said to me: “Prophesy to these bones and say to them: ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.’” Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on 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.” So, I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them, but there was no breath in them. Then He said to me: “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: ‘Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’” I prophesied as He commanded me,* *and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. Then He said to me: “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say: ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ Therefore, prophesy and say to them: Thus says the Lord God: ‘I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.’”* Ezekiel 37:1-14

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place, and suddenly, from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every people under heaven living in Jerusalem, and at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked: “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?” All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another: “What does this mean?” But others sneered and said: “They are filled with new wine.” But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: “Fellow Jews, and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”* Acts 2:1-8; 1-17

*A grandmother told her granddaughter, “Tomorrow, we’re going to Sunday school”*

*“I don’t like Sunday school,” said the granddaughter.*

*“We need to learn more about God,” replied the grandmother.*

*The granddaughter said, “I learned about Him last week.”*

*“I’ve been going to church all my life, and I haven’t learned enough,” said the grandmother.*

*The granddaughter replied, “Well, maybe you weren’t paying attention!”*

The Unlimited Power

1. Jerusalem is destroyed, the country conquered, the people dispersed, becoming captives in Babylon, and so is Jehoiachin the king of Judah. The remnants of the great and powerful nation are exiled and there is nothing that would offer them any hope. What remains is: a sorrow, resignation, helplessness. Everything is gone, and there is nothing to look for. The image of the Jews in the *“Babylonian Exile”* is best described in Psalm 137: *“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?”*Nothing to look forward, nothing to be happy about. When I observe today’s world reality, I often feel almost the same as these exiles, and the powerful words of Ezekiel: *“Can these bones live?”* sound loud and clear to me. Is there any hope left for the truth and decency in this modern world?

2. Ezekiel’s first and seemingly silent response might have clearly be to be: *“No, there is nothing left.”* In today’s reality, therefore, the *“dry bones* *questions”* must also be asked: *“Can the Church once again be reinvigorated and be a bastion of the truth and decency? Can Christianity be again as enthusiastic and powerful as it once was? Can we still do something, or has the Christianity’s time run out?”* Those questions may not be asked quietly though, they must be asked aloud and publicly, and asked they must be. Although the answer to these questions might at first be the same as Ezekiel’s quiet reply could have been at first, a short: *“no,”* upon some discern however another response unveils, just as in Ezekiel’s case. Ezekiel have been one of the many captives in Babylon, and he probably felt what the author of Psalm 137 felt and stressed, but then he had a dream and that dream changed his whole perception. In a vision he saw the bleached bones, scattered and jumbled around, lifeless and hopeless, yet coming together: “*…there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones come together, bone to its bone…but there was no breath in them.”*The last part of this passage is especially important, because this also is a vision of our world, and of our society today: *“the dry bones scattered everywhere.”*

3. We created the society that has all the necessary tools to support life, the society that practically offers to everyone what is needed, the society with a social system that allows people to live. We drew blueprints for so-called *“peaceful coexistence,”* and we even established churches that became financially independent and secured, able to function forever, and yet most of our churches stand half-empty and the Church’s teachings become inconsistent with the Word of God and irrelevant to many. While living in Canada I became familiar with the congregation which established a trust fund large enough to support the pastor, to cover the expenses of keeping the church open, although only a handful of people would still come and worship in the sanctuary and mainly on major holidays. But the *“spirit”* of that congregation seemed to be quenched, and the fellowship almost dead. This was not a unique church for I am aware of one of our small churches being able to function in the same way, because someone left a large inheritance to that congregation. These *“dry bones”* seem to be attached to one another, but are they alive?

4. Like the *“dry bones”* of Ezekiel’s vision, bones that came together, covered in flesh, with tendons and skin, looking like human beings, but without life in them, being nothing else but the corpses, the skeletons with skin and flesh, and nothing else, but the empty vessels. Many people may not like to hear this, but this indeed is a true vision of the modern Church’s influence and the importance in our society. Modern Church often lacks the *“spirit of life,”* the spirit breathed by God. The modern Church is often not functioning practically, or functioning as on the *“life support system.”* The book of Genesis tells us that when God created Adam from the dust of the ground, He breathed the breath of life into Adam’s nostrils and Adam became alive: *“…then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground[a] and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”* In Ezekiel’s *“vision of the dry bones,”* we see the same: *“…and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.”* Our God is God of the living, not of the dead. Apostle John writes in his Gospel: *“…in Him was life.”* Eventually, according to the Scriptures and the history, the prophecy of Ezekiel unfolded, and king Cyrus, led by God, allowed the exiles to go back to their land, and back to the holy city, Jerusalem, where they eventually rebuild and rededicated the Temple. God brought back to life the very community that was dead. The Ezekiel’s vision message to us today is that God is still able to bring life back to lifelessness, but the Church must be willing to accept the *“life giving breath of God’s Spirit.”*

5. When the Holy Spirit came to God’s people on the day of the Pentecost, He came as promised by Jesus and brought the *“breath of life”* to the discouraged disciples, who then passed it on to the entire Church. Ever since, people in every corner of the world have witnessed the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, the power that some call the *“unlimited,”* the supernatural power, power that allows life of the individual to be transformed, even though such power may not be explained tangibly, or logically. This power still exists, even if most people cannot explain or define it. Only some, those who possessed the *“extraordinary knowledge,”* knowledge that only comes from the close connection to God, may explain and define it. This power exists, even if the world does not see it. I am not an electrician or the electric equipment repairman, but every time I turn on any of my electric or electronic *“gadgets,”* I’m aware of the need for the power source to makethose devices work. On occasion I tried to fix some of them when they malfunctioned, and every time I did so, I could see a little note on all of them: *“Unplug from the power source before opening.”* This warning reminds the users that if they keep the power on while reaching inside any the *“gadget,”* they may experience an *“electric shock,”* and such shocks may not only be painful but even deadly. But has any one of you seen this power flowing? Yet, it is there, and so is the Holy Spirit.

6. I recall the time when I was working on one of my sermons, and all of a sudden, my typewriter stopped working. (It was long ago before the PC era.) I first checked the power outlet assuming that for some reason I unplugged the cord, and then I tried to turn on a light switch, but the light did not go on. At this moment I realized that the power to the house has been cut off. There was nothing I could do, short of starting a generator, but I did not have one. Nothing, but only the battery-operated devices worked. My point is that everything was perfectly good with my all my equipment, except the power source. Sometimes we are like such an equipment. We are in a perfect physical order, yet we cannot be turned on, because we *“unplugged”* ourselves from the *“Power Unlimited.”* A while ago I read somewhere a comment that the North American preaching is patterned on the view: *“Try to stay positive, and be nice.”* Now, you all know that I am not the *“Hell, Brimstone and Fire”* type of a preacher, and I try to be positive in my messages, but I also will not allow not to try to *“overturn every stone,”* to uncover the truth, and I am not afraid to call things as I see them, and as they are. *“Niceties”* and *“political correctness”* in preaching may sustain the existing status quo, or to help the pastor to remain employed, but it is not what the Bible teaches and most certainly it is not what Peter said on the day of the Pentecost. His exact words then were: *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.”* (Acts 2:38) Only connected to the power of the Holy Spirit, the *“Power Unlimited”* we may be able to truly function in this world and so does the Church. We need the power of the Holy Spirit.

7. In other words, what Peter says is this: *“See yourselves as you really are, and do not pretend to be someone else.”* In one of the sermons, I came across in my researches, I found this statement: *“Was there ever a time when more people wanted to be good, or wanted more earnestly a good world in which peace and health and comradely living would prevail than today?”* To me these words sound loud and clear in today’s reality, and serve as a warning that instead of trying to be good, we must come to God as we are, in faith and with repentance, to connect to the *“Unlimited, Supernatural Power”* of the Holy Spirit, and to be guided by Him into being good. *“Can these bones live?”* Yes, they can, but only if the Spirit of God has access to them. Can the Church become radiant and creatively alive once again? Can the Church become the living arm of God once again? The Bible unequivocally says: *“it may,”* but this depends on the Church’s willingness to respond to God and to His call, rather than the whims of a modern world.

8.The question for today’s Church goers is this: *“Are you cynically occupying your seat in the Church believing that you are better than others, or are you praying like the “tax-collector:”* *‘Lord, forgive me, a sinner?’”* Are you discouraged and feeling helpless? Do you allow the Holy Spirit to work through you? After all, the Church is not a *“touchy-filly”* place with the collection of people who believe to be good, but it is a place where the Holy Spirit flows and where His power is reaching out and empowering people. In the *“Valley of the Dried Bones,”* the Spirit of God worked a miracle and the *“bones”* came to life. He still works His miracles, but only if the *“church folks”* are willing to be put to work, to embrace one another, and most of all, to embrace the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to control their lives. Ezekiel had a dream, a vison offered him by God, and he shared this vision, to help others to regain hope in hopelessness, faith in faithlessness, and joy, even in the midst of the sorrow. Ezekiel confronted his people and consequently us, with the need of allowing the Spirit of God to again breathe life into us, just as this happened in the *“Valley of the Dried Bones.”* Today is *“The Pentecost Sunday,”* and the message of a need to be reconnected with the *“Unlimited, Superpower of God’s Spirit”* must be in the center of our worship and life.