Weird - Part One

# A Weird Kind of Faith

# (Ezekiel 37:1-10)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. I think that most of us would have to admit that our goal in life is more along the lines of fitting in, being normal. And so, it’s only natural that there is this struggle with faith and our daily lives as Jesus calls out and says, “Come follow me;” because as followers of Christ we have been called to come out and be separate from the world.

This morning we’re starting a brand-new message series entitled “Weird” and I’m calling today’s message “A Weird Kind of Faith.” I believe this will be a pivotal series for many of you, because you’re going to begin to see things from a different perspective. It’s weird, it’s hard to explain, and I understand because I’ve been there. You see, when I was in my 30s, I was looking for something different, I’d been living how normal people live, doing what normal people did, and I ended up where many normal people end up. I was in debt, stressed out, overwhelmed, overworked, without hope having no idea what the meaning of life was, but as I began reading the Bible, I began to see things differently. In fact, I discovered that much of what the Bible said was just plain weird; but there was a commonsense truthfulness, this attraction, like a magnetic force drawing me toward the things of God.

As I was studying the word of God, praying and seeking God, I wanted to experience everything the Bible promised. I prayed, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior, asking the Holy Spirit to fill me to overflowing, and he washed over me in a powerful demonstration of his presence. Literally overnight, my way of thinking went from being normal to being very weird, even radical, but it was weird in a good way, a God kind of way. Suddenly, I found myself thinking more like Jesus, praying and depending on him in a weird kind of way that was so real and yet so different from anything I’d ever experienced before.

This faith, this call to be a disciple, to follow Jesus was unusual because the things that he said were just so weird. In fact, they often caught me off guard, causing me to ponder his meaning, and snapping me out of my self-centered life. For example, he said things like,

*“Follow me and let the dead bury their own dead" (Matthew 8:22).*

Or,

*"Come, follow me and I will make you fishers of men” (Mark 1:17).*

But the clincher for me came when he said,

*“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it” (Luke 9:23-24).*

I had nothing to lose and everything to gain. I was hooked, the Holy Spirit had drawn me out, much like Moses as an infant was drawn out of the river by the Pharaoh’s daughter and taken into the Pharaoh’s house. He didn’t understand it growing up, but he had a calling on his life, and many decades later he would find himself standing before another king, a different Pharaoh, declaring with a weird kind of faith:

*“The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me…” (Exodus 7:16).*

He had that same weird kind of faith which would cause a shepherd boy named David to confront the giant Goliath. The Bible says that David had taken food to the front lines of this battle with the Philistines when he happened to hear Goliath making fun of God and the people of God. David couldn’t stand that, and he stood up and said,

*“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (1 Samuel 17:26).*

The Army of Israel thought Goliath was too big to defeat, but David took him down with a sling and a few stones knowing that he was too big to miss. It was a weird kind of faith that would cause a teenage boy to do what thousands of trained soldiers were scared to do. And I tell you this as an introduction, laying the foundation for this series, because Christianity is weird, it’s a weird kind of faith. You know, to die to live, the first is last, the greatest is the least, in fact, number one, it’s required that we believe in the impossible, and so it’s a weird kind of faith.

## 1. Believing in the Impossible

As I was thinking of weird stories, I kept finding myself drawn back to a story, a vision of some bones in the Old Testament book of Ezekiel. If you would like to follow along in your Bible, I want to read to you from Ezekiel chapter 37, about a time when all hope seemed to be gone for the people of God. Jerusalem and the Temple had been destroyed, the people had been sent into exile in a foreign land, and it was in this season of great despair and hopelessness that God gave Ezekiel a vision. He tells us about it in verse one saying,

*“The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign Lord, you alone know."*

*“Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you, and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin; I will put breath in you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 37:1-6).*

Some of you need to hear this today because you’ve been struggling, you’ve been fighting, trying to rise up, but you’ve lost hope. And we can almost imagine this scene, feeling the scorching heat of the sun beating down, wondering what God was going to do. Ezekiel in obedience prophesies to these bones in verse seven, and as he was prophesying,

*“There was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together, bone to bone” (Ezekiel 37:7).*

Suddenly, there was something breaking in the atmosphere, everything that had been taken, that which had been stolen was coming back, and the bones were coming together, bone to bone. Ezekiel said,

*“I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was (still) no breath in them” (Ezekiel 37:8).*

I can’t help but think of the contrast between those 120 men and women filled with the Holy Spirit in the upper room on the day of Pentecost and the Church in our nation today. Just like these bones, too many of us remain motionless in our own dry and desolate valley; churches that have no impact on the culture around them, lifeless and hopeless, doing church instead of being the church, desperately needing the breath of the Holy Spirit.

In verse nine, God addresses this seemingly hopeless situation, commanding Ezekiel,

*“Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain, 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” (Ezekiel 37:9-10).*

Too often we forget in the middle of our struggles that the power to live comes from God’s Spirit. It’s the Spirit that gives life and unites us as a vast army, not to kill, but to boldly and courageously bring the love and grace of God to our communities.

Today, you and I are here in Emmitsburg Maryland, a town of several thousand people, because we’re an answer to a request from heaven. The prophet Isaiah said,

*“I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8).*

When Dana and I said, “Here am I, send me,” we didn’t come to Emmitsburg because we were bored. We came because we were led by the Holy Spirit, we were listening to the Holy Spirit, and we were believing in the impossible. I know it’s weird in a town full of churches, but we recognized that God was preparing for a great move of his Spirit in Emmitsburg. He is breathing life into these dry bones as they hear the word of the Lord, there is a noise in the atmosphere, a rattling sound, and the bones are coming together. The body of Christ is coming together and we recognize that church is not supposed to be a place you visit for one hour each Sunday, but we are the Church; and number two, we’re supposed to have spiritual influence over this region.

## 2. We Are Spiritual Influencers

This is important because our community is filled with dead bones, very dry bones, and I’ve been called to preach the uncompromising Gospel of Jesus Christ. You see, the promise of Jesus is that,

*"Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).*

And so, we’re here to lift up the name of Jesus, not compromising the Word of God to please a shifting culture but breaking the back of addiction, adultery, and oppression because there’s life and freedom in Jesus’ name.

We’re going to declare the name of Jesus, being a little weird, and offering hope to those who have lost hope. We’re going to speak the Word of God to those dry bones trapped in addiction, those that are depressed and in bondage. You see, we want to be the hands and feet of Jesus, partnering together to meet the needs of this community, and seeing lives transformed in Jesus name. I know it sounds weird, it doesn’t make sense, but we are the Church and we’ve been given authority, and so, we’re here to take back what the enemy has stolen.

In Luke’s gospel, Jesus and his disciples sailed to the region of Gerasenes and no sooner did Jesus step ashore than was he confronted by a demon possessed man. Immediately he commanded that evil spirit to come out of the man and he fell at his feet shouting,

*"What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" (Luke 8:28).*

*Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss” (Luke 8:30-31).*

They pleaded with Jesus not to send them away, but to send them into a nearby herd of pigs; because they don’t care what body they inhabit, they just don’t want to be cast out of the region.

I believe that God has called this church to speak with the authority of Jesus name and we’re going to kick some demons out of this region. I know that’s weird, but Jesus gave us the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19). In fact, in Mark chapter 16 he promised,

*“These signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes…and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them…they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well” (Mark 16:17-18).*

Today, there are some of you that have been battling, you’ve been struggling and wrestling with fear, anxiety, and different symptoms, but you’re going to experience freedom today. This church is going to pray soon, we’re going to speak boldly in the name of Jesus, and we’re going to see sickness, depression, and heaviness leave this region.

You see, Jesus not only holds the keys of death and Hades, but the Bible says he’s the one who holds the key of David, symbolizing his power and authority. Revelation chapter 3 tells us,

*“What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” (Revelation 3:7).*

I believe that Jesus has placed before us an open door that no one can shut; that Christ’s Community Church is an answer to a request from heaven, and you and I are part of a great move of the Spirit of God to breathe life into this region. We are spiritual influencers, servant of God changing our culture, inviting people to come receive God’s grace.

Jesus described the Kingdom of God to be like a Father who prepared a wedding banquet for his Son. He sent his servants to those who’d been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, everything was ready, but they refused to come. And so, he said to his servants in Matthew chapter 22,

*“‘Those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So, the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad…” (Matthew 22:8-10).*

Now, I know that’s a little different, that’s weird, that messes with church people, but God says invite everybody both good and bad. And so, if somebody wants to come and praise Jesus, if they want to hear the Word of God let them come. You see, we’re just going to love people, we’re not going to turn anyone away, but we’re not going to compromise the Word of God. And so, number three, we’re taking the Word of God seriously.

## 3. Taking the Word of God Seriously

And we’re going to welcome people, we’re going to disciple them, baptizing them, and walking with them to victory. But it’s not just my wife and I serving God and serving this community; it’s all of us as the church, both men and women empowered by the Holy Spirit ministering as the hands and feet of Jesus. We are his church and Jesus said that on our profession of faith in him as Messiah, as our Savior, he said,

*“On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).*

You need to know that Jesus wasn’t building the church just to be a safe place, a sanctuary, but he was building a church that would confront demons. A church that would get dirty, that would be around the broken, the lost, and the hurting, but wouldn’t be overcome. He was building a church that would put Satan under its feet.

God is stirring some of you, faith is rising up, it’s a weird kind of faith that you simply can’t ignore. No longer will you be content with normal Christianity, just a lukewarm halfhearted going to church, but you’re going to be willing to step out in faith, to take a risk and sacrifice everything. You’re going to believe in the impossible, be a spiritual influencer, because you’re taking the word of God seriously. I know it’s weird, but the God of the Bible will take you off normal path.

In fact, I pray that if you’re going through life trying to be normal that the Holy Spirit would convict you and redirect you with these words of Jesus. In Matthew chapter 7, verse 13, Jesus said,

*“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it” (Matthew 7:13).*

This wide gate and broad road is the way that many of us have lived our lives thinking it must be okay because that’s where everybody else is going. But Jesus said, that’s the wrong way, it’s a path to destruction, and in verse 14 he said,

*“But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).*

I want you to take seriously the teachings of Jesus because if your life looks like everybody else’s, if you’re doing what everyone else is doing, if you’re pretty normal, it could be that you’re on the broad road that leads to destruction. And so, I want to invite you to follow Jesus on the narrow road, because normal is not working.

If you want something better, believing in the impossible, being a spiritual influencer, and taking the word of God seriously; you’re going to have to leave the broad road and get on the narrow road where people will call you weird. If you want to break free from the normalcy of our culture, being rushed, stressed, and overwhelmed by life you’ll have to do something different, you will have to do what few do, and take the narrow gate. I know it’s hard to choose the path less traveled, because we’re often inhibited by other people’s expectations, but God didn’t create you to fit the frame of other people’s expectations. It’s a choice we must make daily because Jesus wasn’t playing games, we’re going to have to get serious, we’re going to have to go after God, and we’re going to be weird.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

(301) 447-4224

March 1, 2020

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*